DISCOURSES
OF RUMI

(OR *FIHI MA FIHI*)

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY

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OMPHALOSKEPSIS
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preface

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The poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi has recently become popular and well known, thanks to new translations by Coleman Barks, Robert Bly and others. Anyone who is looking to experience Rumi's incandescent love need go no further than his volumes of verse, but if you want to see the subtleties of his wisdom and find insights into the real meaning of his poetry, then Rumi's Discourses hold the key.

Until this publication, as far as the publishers know, all previous translations of Rumi's Discourses into English have been made by scholars, written from the world of academia. While their books were published with care to preserve the accuracy of Rumi's literary meaning, this publication available here strives to restore the subtle impacts of Rumi's words that carry his real message.

Rumi is not just telling stories that teach, or relating his philosophical and religious understanding, as the previous translations have focused on, but his words have been crafted to transmit something of great substance. As the Sufis have often said, this matter cannot be studied from the outside, it can only be discovered from within. No doubt such statements will raise disagreements, but we need only refer to Rumi's own discourses to see his own opinions on this very subject. Over and over Rumi criticizes those who study at length the outward sense of things, but miss the inner Truth.

It is likely that the Discourses of Rumi will only appeal to those who are willing to make some effort to study his words. But if the reader is willing to read carefully, he or she should be able to find a greater glimpse of Rumi's relationship with life and his spiritually intoxicating intimacy with the Path of Love.

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introduction

Recognized as perhaps the greatest mystical poet of Islam, Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) communicated something through his writing that has attracted spiritual seekers from almost every religion in the world, for hundreds of years. Even in his day, Rumi was sought out by merchants and kings, devout worshippers and rebellious seekers, famous scholars and common peasants, men and women. At his funeral, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Arabs, Persians, Turks and Romans honored him. Listen to his call for seekers of truth:

Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.
It doesn't matter.
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vow
a hundred times.
Come, yet again, come, come.

Rumi's love and honor for all religious traditions was not always popular in his day, and often provoked criticism from the more dogmatic. A story is told that one such public challenge came from a Muslim dignitary, Qonavi, who confronted Rumi before an audience. "You claim to be at one with 72 religious sects," said Qonavi, "but the Jews cannot agree with the Christians, and the Christians cannot agree with Muslims. If they cannot agree with each other, how could you agree with them all?" To this Rumi answered, "Yes, you are right, I agree with you too."

Although kings were his followers, Rumi's critics could never understand why Rumi's greatest love and dedication went to what they called, "the tailors, the cloth-sellers, and the petty shopkeepers - uncouth and uncultured ruffians." Yet even amongst these, his dearest companions, Rumi allowed no vanity. The story is told that one day, while Rumi was in deep contemplation, surrounded by his disciples, a drunkard walked in shouting and stumbling. The man staggered toward Rumi, and then fell on him. To Rumi's followers such a disgrace of their teacher was intol-

erable, and they rose as one to rush the ignorant fool. Rumi stopped them with his raised hand, saying, "I thought this intruder was the one who was intoxicated, but now I see it is not he, but my own students who are drunk!"

There are thousands who believe that Rumi's presence (baraka) still exists today, and still teaches. If this is true, it is certainly largely due to the remarkable vitality that can be found in his writings and poetry, and a relevancy they contain that reaches to our inner core. Rumi's poetry has captured the hearts of spiritual seekers around the world because of its depth and beauty. His verses sketch out the whole panorama of life, from human sorrow and devotion, to the universal breadth of God's hidden plan. His poetry seems fathomless and endless.

Rumi has also left to us another manuscript that is not so well known - the collection of discourses given at the gatherings with his students. It Is What It Is (Fihi ma Fihi) is a record of these spiritual discussions that often followed music and dance, the reciting of sacred poems and phrases, and the now famous Whirling Dervish

exercise that Rumi originated to enliven and bring spiritual opening to the rather somber people of Konya, Turkey, in his day.

This present book is edited and rewritten from A. J. Arberry's original English translation, published in 1961 as Discourses of Rumi. Arberry himself admitted that his scholastic, literal, work "is not an easy book to read…and the original is by no means easy always to understand." According to more recent studies of the original manuscript (Chittick and Shah, for example,) Arberry's translation also has some technical errors, and better understandings of Rumi's subtle spiritual teachings have come to light. I hope this edition will help illuminate and clarify such passages, and to build on Professor Arberry's contribution.

If you were to compare the original manuscript of Rumi's discourses with this present book, the first change you might notice would be the dropping of phrases like, "may Allah bless him and give him peace," after every reference to a saint or prophet, which was the proper and respectful way of speaking in Rumi's day, and

still is today in some parts of the world. Also, Rumi makes numerable references to the Koran and quotes from it frequently. Since Rumi's listeners knew the Koran well, such quotes were familiar and personal brush strokes. However, to many readers of this book this will not be so. Therefore, I have removed a few quotes that could prove confusing to those who do not know the Koran, or might disturb the direction of Rumi's message.

Rumi's reference to God is always deeply personal. Whether he uses the masculine term "Allah," or refers to God as "The Beloved," it is nearness and closeness to God that Rumi is expressing. Unfortunately, the English language has no personal, neutral pronoun for God. To always use "He" in referring to God, to mankind, or to any general person, was common practice when Arberry released his edition, but seems too masculine today. In Rumi's Persian language, "God" has no gender, and Rumi's symbolic portrayal of God uses images of the Lover, and the Ocean, as often as the King. Therefore, I have used "It" to refer to God in places, to help rise

above gender, but have also used "He" and "Beloved" to give the personal closeness of Rumi's message.

The flow, rhythm and impact of Rumi's images are what I have tried to preserve, over everything else. These inner subtleties are, paradoxically, more important than the apparent point he is making. For example, in discourse Twenty-Six Rumi says, "Beware! Do not say, 'I have understood.' The more you understand and grasp these words, the farther you will be from understanding them. Their meaning comes in not understanding." Such insights can not be explained, we must catch them inwardly, with only the subtle clues that Rumi leaves to guide us.

Follow Rumi closely in this way, and you will see a string that holds one pearl to the next on this necklace. Each story, each image, is a new moment in Rumi's discourse, yet rarely is it broken from the last moment. Step by step, Rumi is dancing. We must be limber and flexible to follow without losing that thread. Yet, hidden in the rhythm and pattern of Rumi's dance is his true intention.

Even today, Rumi challenges many of our basic cultural assumptions, and often in ways we may not notice if we aren't careful. It is easy to make the mistake of rejecting an idea on the grounds that it is out of date, or that it sounds merely like a traditional, orthodox opinion. I would caution about ever jumping to this conclusion with Rumi, since you will more likely find that he has caught you making the very same error.

For example, in discourse Twelve, Rumi asks the question, "If a saint, who carries God's secret jewel [spiritual grace], strikes someone and breaks their nose and jaw, who is the wronged party?" Rumi claims it is the saint who has been wronged. "Since the saint is consumed in God, their actions are God's actions. God is not called a wrongdoer."

At first glance, this smacks of religious zealotry. The same sort that brought about the killings and murders of the Inquisition. No different than any other self-justified excuse. Anyone can blame God for their own choices, we say. But read Rumi's words closely; he is not talking about justifying violence. He is asking

what makes an act right or wrong, good or bad. He is asking us to look beneath our cultural ideas of right and wrong to see the true cause: God's will.

But the problem doesn't stop here, since we have not yet caught Rumi's vision. Our culture rejects ideas of Absolute Right or Wrong. We have learned that each person must decide for themselves what is true, and no outside authority has the right to force their perspective. And so, after centuries of petty religious battles and church-state slaughters, we have solved the problem socially by placing relative truth above Absolute Truth. In other words, we still don't believe the saint has the right to strike out.

Rumi knows all this, and is way ahead. He goes on to say, "A westerner lives in the West. An oriental comes to visit. The westerner is a stranger to the oriental, but who is the real stranger? Is not the oriental a stranger to all the West?" In other words, sure the idea of a Holy War, or a true saint using violence sounds strange and wrong to us, but does that mean it is wrong? Who is the real stranger to Truth?

Rumi continues, “This whole world is but a house, no more. Whether we go from this room to that room, or from this corner to that corner, still are we not in the same house? But the saints who possess God’s jewel have left this house, they have gone beyond. Mohammed said, ‘Islam began a stranger and will return a stranger as it began.’

In this way, Rumi’s words come right through time and ask us today, “Can you accept that a true Lover of God could carry God’s authority? Can you see, because of what they carry, they will always be a stranger to this world?” So who is out of date? Certainly anyone bound by the culture of their time, anyone who is not moved by something greater.

If you see what is happening here, you will see that Rumi is using our own unexamined aversions and dislikes to teach us. Some of Rumi’s most profound poetry is ignored because of such thorns, prompting him to say, in discourse Thirty-Five: “How wonderfully gracious God is! It sets a seal on those who listen and do not understand, argue and yet learn nothing. God is gracious. Its wrath is gracious, and even Its lock is gracious.

But Its lock is nothing next to Its unlocking, for the grace of that is indescribable. If I shatter into pieces, it is through the infinite grace of God's unlocking."

This raises an interesting observation. Rumi was never general in his discussions, he always spoke to specific situations. He addressed the particular beliefs and conflicts of those around him, and he was a witness and spokesman for The Way as it was manifesting in his day. And still his words can teach us now.

If a traveler tripped over a rock in their path 700 years ago, and from this event altered the course of their life, we might conclude the rock was only incidental. But if that same rock trips thousands, through the centuries, each walking away with a different message and a different lesson, then can we call this incidental? When foolish people trip, they get up and walk away as if nothing happened. They learn nothing. A wise person will find a greater meaning for their fall. But a rock that trips travelers in every age, each time imparting a different meaning, that is not just a rock. That is God.

Many of the terms Rumi uses have a very different meaning in their Islamic context than they do in their Christian sense. For example, the word "faith" amongst many Sufis is much closer to what we might call "knowingness." This is not the same as "belief," which refers to how a person chooses to see things. The Quakers had a term known as "convincement" that expresses some of this, but still betrays too much of man's choice in the matter. As Rumi uses the word "faith," he is talking more about the effect of having experienced something that changes how we see life, than he is talking about having been sold on some doctrine.

Likewise, when Rumi refers to Islam, he is talking about The Way. He is not talking about the preconceived notions that people have about Islam today, or even in his day, but the spiritual path itself and the religious tradition. It is not always easy to understand this as Rumi meant it, just as Rumi's use of Mohammed as the Prophet and Voice of God is easily interpreted as traditional belief, which is only the outward cloak of what Rumi is really saying. It is just this sort of

blindness that Rumi is speaking to when he says, in discourse Seventy: "Wherever men or women put a big lock, that is a sign of something precious and valuable. Just like the snake that guards a treasure, do not regard what repels you, but look instead at the preciousness of the treasure."

The title of Rumi's discourses, Fihi ma Fihi, was translated by Arberry to In It What Is In It, but I believe It Is What It Is comes closer to Rumi's intent. In any case, this title is filled with multiple meanings, just as all of Rumi's works are. This may be a foreign idea, that someone could be communicating many things, at many levels, at the same time, but let us look closely at this title for a moment.

First, it is making a very specific, physical reference. "It," meaning this manuscript, is the same as what is in "It," meaning Rumi's most famous work, his six volume poem, the Masnavi. In other words, the Fihi ma Fihi provides explanations and keys to unlock the meaning of the Masnavi. The two works were written parallel to each other, and contain many references and stories that are continued from one to the other. This being true,

it is quite surprising that Rumi's discourses have not gained more attention. But this is only one of the title's meanings, and by no means the most important.

At another level, It Is What It Is asks us not to put into this manuscript more or less than what it is. It is not clothed in the high cloth of religious sanctity, nor does it speak as some authority. Rumi wants us simply to see it for what it is. He wants us to be emotionally honest and not to get carried away with the form. In other words, don't become attached to the beauty of this vase, it is merely a holder of The Rose.

At the same time, "It" refers to God. Therefore God is what God is. This is the same as the Muslim saying, "There is no God but God." In other words, Rumi asks, "What more is there to say?" All the words here, all the stories and explanations are saying nothing more than this. There is no more to reality than reality. God is. Reality is. It is what it is. Explanations cannot explain it. Words cannot reveal it.

And so, "It," meaning the manuscript, is what "It," meaning God or reality, is. Therefore, the

Fihi ma Fihi is cut from the same cloth as reality, it is the same substance as God.

If you can see these many meanings, all swimming like fish in the ocean that is the title, then you will know how to read Rumi. May it also help you catch real fish as well.

- Doug Marman

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discourse 1

Rumi stated: Mohammed, the great Prophet, once said, “The worst of scholars are those who visit princes, and the best of princes are those who visit scholars. Wise is the prince who stands at the door of the poor, and wretched are the poor who stand at the door of the prince.”

Now, taking the outward sense of these words, people think that scholars should never visit princes or they will become the worst of scholars. That is not the true meaning. Rather, the worst of scholars are those who depend upon princes, and who revolve their life and purpose around the attention and favor of princes. Such scholars take up learning in hopes that princes will give them presents, hold them in esteem, and promote them to office.

Therefore, such scholars improve themselves and pursue knowledge on account of princes. They become scholars from their fear of princes. They subject themselves to the princes’ control. They conform themselves to the plans that princes

map out for them. So, whether they visit a prince, or a prince visits them, still in every case they're the visitors, and it is the prince who is visited.

However, when scholars do not study to please princes, but instead pursue learning from first to last for the sake of truth—when their actions and words spring from the truth they have learned and put to use because this is their nature and they cannot live otherwise—just as fish can only thrive in water—such scholars subject themselves to the control and direction of God. They become blessed with the guidance of the prophets. Everyone living in their time is touched by them and derives inspiration from their example, whether they are aware of the fact or not.

Should such scholars visit a prince, they are still the ones visited and the prince is the visitor, because in every case it is the prince who takes from these scholars and receives help from them. Such scholars are independent of the prince. They are like the light-giving sun, whose whole function is giving to all, universally, converting stones into rubies and carnelians, changing mountains into mines of copper, gold, silver and iron, mak-

ing the earth fresh and green, bringing fruit to the trees, and warmth to the breeze. Their trade is giving, they do not receive. The Arabs have expressed this in a proverb: "We have learned in order to give, we have not learned in order to take." And so in all ways they are the visited, and the prince is the visitor.

The thought comes to me at this point to comment on a verse of the Koran, although it is not related to the present discourse. However, this idea comes to me now, and I want to express it so that it can go on record.

O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands.
'If God knows of any good in your hearts,
He will give you more than He has taken,
And He will forgive you.
Surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.'

This verse was revealed when Mohammed had defeated the unbelievers, slaying, plundering and taking prisoners, whom he tied hand and foot. Amongst the prisoners was his uncle, 'Abbas. The chained people wept and wailed all night in their helpless humiliation. They had given up all hope of their lives, expecting the sword and slaughter. Mohammed, seeing this, laughed.

"Look!" the prisoners exclaimed. "He shows the traits of a person after all. This claim that he is superhuman is not true. There he stands looking at us prisoners in these chains, enjoying it. Just like everyone ruled by their passions—when they gain victory over their enemies and see their opponents vanquished to their will, they rejoice and feel happiness."

"Not so," answered Mohammed, seeing what was in their hearts. "Never would I laugh at the sight of enemies conquered by my hand, or the sight of your suffering. But I do rejoice, in fact I laugh, because with inner vision I see myself dragging and drawing people by collars and chains, out of the black smoke of Hell into Paradise, while they complain and cry, 'Why are you pulling us from this pit of self-destruction into that garden of security?' So, laughter overcomes me.

"But since you have not yet been granted the vision to see what I am saying, listen. God commands me to say this to you: First you gathered your forces and mustered your might, trusting completely in your own virtue and valor. You said

to yourselves, 'We will conquer the Muslims and vanquish them.' But you did not see that One Power more powerful than yourselves. You did not know the One Force above your force. And so all that you planned turned out the opposite. Even now in your fear, you still hold onto your beliefs and do not see the One Reality over you. Rather than facing that Power, you see my power, because it is easier for you to see yourselves conquered by me.

"But even in your present state, still I say to you: If you recognize my power, and accept yourselves vanquished to my will in all circumstances, I can still deliver you from this grief. He, who is able to bring forth a black bull from a white bull, can also produce a white bull from a black bull. Turn away from your former ways, and likewise I will return to you all the property that has been taken from you, in fact many times as much. Even more, I will absolve you of all blame, and grant you prosperity in this world and the world to come."

"I have repented," said 'Abbas. "I have turned from my former ways."

Mohammed said, “God demands a token of this claim you make, for easy it is to boast of love, but other is the proof thereof.”

“In God’s name, what token do you demand?” asked ‘Abbas.

“Give all the properties that remain to you for the army of Islam, so the army of Islam may be strengthened,” said Mohammed. “That is, of course, if you have truly become a Muslim and desire the good of Islam and Muslimdom.”

“Prophet of God, what remains to me?” said ‘Abbas. “They have taken everything, leaving me not so much as an old reed-mat.”

“You see,” said Mohammed, “you have not yet given up your old ways. You have not yet seen the light of truth. Should I tell you how much property you still have? Where you have hidden it? To whom you have entrusted it? Where you concealed and buried it?”

“God forbid!” exclaimed ‘Abbas.

“Did you not entrust so much property specifically to your mother?” asked Mohammed. “Did you not bury your gold under such and such a wall? Did you not tell your mother in detail, ‘If I return, give this back to me. But if I do not return

safely, then spend so much upon such and such an object, and give so much to So-and-So, and so much is to be for yourself'?"

When 'Abbas heard these words he raised his hand in complete acceptance. "Prophet of God," he said, "truly, I have always thought you carried the fortune of the old kings, such as Haman, Shaddad, Nimrod and the rest. But now that you have spoken I know this favor is divine, from the world beyond, from the throne of God."

"Now you have spoken truly," said Mohammed. "This time I have heard the snapping of the girdle of doubt, that you had within you. I have an ear hidden within my inmost Soul, and with that hidden ear I can hear the snapping of doubt within anyone. Now it is true for a fact that you believe."

I have told this story to the Amir for this reason: In the beginning you came forward as a champion of Muslimdom. "I ransom myself," you said. "I sacrifice my own desires, considerations and judgement so that Islam will remain secure and strong." But because you put your trust in your own plans, loosing sight of God, and forgetting that all things proceed from God, all

your intentions have turned out the opposite. Having struck a bargain with the Tartars, you are unintentionally giving them assistance to destroy the Syrians and the Egyptians, which in the end may bring ruin to the realm of Islam. So God has turned this plan you made for the survival of Islam, into its own destruction.

Turn your face to God, for things are in a dangerous condition. Yet, even in your present state, my friend, do not give up hope, but look to God and give yourself up to Its will. You thought your own strength of spirit proceeded from yourself, just as 'Abbas and the prisoners did, thus you have fallen into weakness. But do not give up hope, because He, who can produce weakness from strength, can bring forth an even greater strength from this weakness. Just as Mohammed rejoiced during the prisoners' grief, so too I find joy in your present embarrassment, because from this weakness and suffering can come something greater than has been lost. Therefore, do not give up hope, for

"Of God's comfort no one despairs,
Except the unbelievers."

My purpose in speaking this way to the Amir was so that he could see the matter correctly, and accept the will of God humbly. He has fallen out of an exceedingly high state into a low state, yet in this way he may grow. Life can show the most wonderful things, but behind all of them lies a trap should we forget the source of this wonder. God has devised this plan so that we will learn not to claim, out of arrogance and vanity, these ideas and plans as our own.

If everything were in truth as it appears to be, Mohammed, endowed as he was with a vision so penetrating, so illuminated, would never have cried,

"Lord, show me things as they are.
You show a thing as fair, and in reality it is ugly.
You show a thing as ugly, and in truth it is beautiful.
Show us everything just as it is,
So that we will not fall into the snare."

Now, your judgement, however good and luminous it may be, is certainly not better than the Prophet's judgement. So do not put your trust in every idea and every notion, but only in God and Its wisdom.

discourse 2

Someone said: “Our Master does not utter a word.”

Rumi answered: Well, it was the thought of me that brought you to my presence. This thought of me did not speak with you saying, “How are things with you?” The thought without words drew you here. If the reality of me draws you without words and transports you to another place, what is so wonderful with words? Words are the shadow of reality, a mere branch of reality. Since the shadow draws, how much more the reality!

Words are a pretext. It is the inner bond that draws one person to another, not words. If someone should see a hundred thousand miracles and divine blessings, still, without an inner connection to that saint or prophet who was the source of those miracles, all these phenomena would come to nothing. It is this inward element that draws and moves us. If there were no element of amber

in straw, the straw would never be attracted to the amber [Rumi is referring to static electricity here]. They would not cling to each other, even if you rubbed the amber with fur. This exchange between them is hidden, not a visible thing.

It is the thought that brings us. The thought of a garden brings us to the garden. The thought of a shop brings us to the shop. However, within these thoughts is a secret deception. Have you never gone to a certain place thinking it would be good, only to find disappointment? These thoughts then are like a shroud, and within that shroud someone is hidden. The day reality draws you and the shroud of thought disappears, there will be no disappointment. Then you will see reality as it is, and nothing more.

"Upon that day when the secrets are tried."

So, what reason is there for me to speak? In reality that which draws is a single thing, but it appears to be many. We are possessed by a hundred different desires. "I want vermicelli," we say. "I want ravioli. I want halvah. I want fritters. I want fruit. I want dates." We name these one by one, but the root of the matter is a single thing:

the root is hunger. Don't you see how, once we have our fill of but one thing, we say, "Nothing else is necessary?" Therefore, it was not ten or a hundred things, but one thing that drew us.

"And their number
We have appointed only as a trial."

The many things of this world are a trial appointed by God, for they hide the single reality. There is a saying that the saint is one, humankind is a hundred, meaning the saint's whole attention remains upon the one truth, while people are scattered over a hundred appearances. But which hundred? Which fifty? Which sixty? Lost in this world of mirrored reflections, they are a faceless people without hands and feet, without mind and Soul, quivering like a magic talisman, like quicksilver or mercury. They do not know who they are. Call them sixty or a hundred or a thousand, and the saint is one, but is not this view a trial itself? For the truth is that the hundreds are nothing, while the saint is a thousand, and a hundred thousand, and thousands of thousands.

A king once gave a single soldier the rations for a hundred men. The army protested, but the king

said nothing. When the day of battle arrived, all the men fled the field, except that one soldier who fought alone. “There you are,” the king said. “It was for this I fed one man as a hundred.”

It behooves us to strip away all our prejudices and seek out a friend of God. However, when we’ve spent our whole life in the company of people who lack discrimination, then our own discriminative faculty becomes weak, and that true friend may pass us by unrecognized.

Discrimination is a quality that is always hidden in a person. Don’t you see that an insane person possesses hands and feet but lacks discrimination? Discrimination is a subtle essence within you. Yet, day and night you have been occupied with nurturing the physical form that does not know right from wrong. Why have you devoted all your energies to looking after the physical, entirely neglecting that subtle essence? The physical exists through that essence, but that essence in no way depends on the physical.

The light that shines through the windows of the eyes and ears—if those windows did not exist, the light would not stop. It would find other win-

dows to shine through. If you bring a lamp before the sun, do you say, "I see the sun by means of this lamp"? God forbid! If you did not bring the lamp, the sun would still shine. What need is there for a lamp?

This is the danger in associating with kings. It is not that you may lose your life—we must lose our life in the end anyway, whether today or tomorrow does not matter. The danger arises from the fact that when kings enter upon the scene, and the spell of their influence gains strength, becoming like a great lamp, the person who keeps company with them, claims their friendship, and accepts money from them will inevitably speak in accordance with their desires. That person will listen to the kings' mundane views with the utmost attention, and will not be able to deny them.

That is where the danger lies, it leads to a fading respect for the true source. When you cultivate the interest of kings, that other interest which is fundamental to the spiritual life becomes a stranger to you. The more you proceed down the path of kings, the more that direction where the

Beloved dwells becomes lost. The more you make your peace with worldly people, the more the Beloved turns away from you. Going in their direction renders you subject to their rule. Once you have turned down their path, in the end God gives them power over you.

It is a pity to reach the ocean, and to be satisfied with a little pitcherful from the sea. After all, there are pearls in the sea, and from the sea come a myriad of precious things. What is the value in just taking water? What pride can intelligent people have in that? This world is a mere foam fleck of the True Sea. That Ocean is the science of the saints, and within that Water is the Pearl Itself.

This world is but foam full of floating jetsam. Yet, through the turning of the waves, and the rhythmic surging of the sea in constant motion, this foam takes on a certain beauty. But this beauty is a borrowed thing coming from elsewhere. It is a false coin that sparkles to the eye.

People are the astrolabe of God, but it requires an astronomer to use the astrolabe. If a vegetable-seller or a greengrocer should find the astrolabe, what good would it do them? From that astro-

labe, what could they know of the movements of the circling stars and the positions of the planets, their influences and so forth? But in the hands of the astronomer, the astrolabe becomes truly valuable.

Just as this copper astrolabe reflects the movements of the heavens like a mirror, so the human being is the astrolabe of God.

"We have honored the children of Adam."

Those who have been moved by God to see the one reality and learn Its ways through the astrolabe of their own being, behold moment by moment, flash by flash, the testament of God. Indeed, it is an infinite beauty that never leaves their mirror.

God has servants who cloak themselves in a wisdom, knowingness and grace invisible to others. Out of their excessive jealousy and love for God these servants cloak themselves, just like Mutanabbi says of beautiful women:

Figured silks they wore, not to beautify
But to guard their beauty from lustful eyes.

discourse 3

The Amir said: "Night and day my heart and Soul are intent upon serving God, but because of my responsibilities with Mongol affairs I have no time for such service."

Rumi answered: Those works too are work done for God, since they are the means of providing peace and security for your country. You sacrifice yourself, your possessions, your time, so the hearts of a few will be lifted to peacefully obeying God's will. So this too is a good work. God has inclined you towards such good work, and your great love for what you do is proof of God's blessing. However, if your love of work were to weaken, this would be a sign of grace denied, for God leads only those who are worthy into those right attitudes that will earn spiritual rewards.

Take the case of a hot bath. Its heat comes from the fuel that is burned, such as dry hay, firewood, dung and the like. In the same way, God uses what to outward appearance looks evil

and nasty, yet in reality is the means to cleanliness and purity. Like the bath, the man or woman fired by the efforts of work becomes purified and a benefit to all people.

(At this point some friends arrived. Rumi excused himself and said:) If I do not attend to you, and do not welcome you or ask after you, this is really a mark of respect. Respect is what is appropriate for the occasion. When someone is at prayer, they should not stop to greet their father and brother. Disregard of friends while being engaged in prayer is the highest regard, and the greatest courtesy, since that person does not break away from absorption with God on account of dear ones. This saves those loved ones from being subject to Divine reproach. Therefore, true respect is not a social pleasantry, but is concern for the spiritual honor of others.

Someone asked: "Is there any way nearer to God than prayer?"

Rumi answered: Yes, but it is also prayer. It is prayer without the outward form. This outer form of prayer is the body of prayer, since it has a beginning and ending. Everything that has a

beginning and ending is a body. All words and sounds have a beginning and an end, and therefore are form and body. But the inner soul of prayer is unconditioned and infinite, and has neither beginning nor end.

Now, Mohammed, who invented the Muslim prayer, said, "I have a time with God not contained by any prophet, nor limited by any angel next to God." Hence we realize that the soul of prayer is not the outer form alone. Rather it is a complete absorption, a state without room for these outward forms. Gabriel himself, who is pure reality, cannot be found therein.

It is related that one day friends found my father in a state of complete absorption. The hour of prayer arrived, and these friends called out to my father, "It is time for prayer." My father did not heed their words, so they arose and occupied themselves with the prayer. However, two friends stayed with my father and did not stand up to pray.

Now, one of those who were praying was named Khvajagi. It was shown to him clearly, in his inward heart, that all those who were at

prayer were standing behind the Prophet with their backs turned to Mecca, while the two who were with my father were facing Mecca. Since my father had passed away from any sense of personal identity, his self no longer remaining, having been consumed in the Light of God, he had become the Light of God.

Whoever turns their back on the Light of God, and faces the wall of their prayer-niche, has surely turned their back on Mecca. For God's light is the soul of the Mecca-ward direction.

Mohammed once rebuked a friend, saying, "I called you. Why didn't you come?" The friend replied, "I was occupied with prayer." The Prophet said, "Well, wasn't I calling you for God?" The friend answered, "I am helpless."

It is good to feel helpless every moment, seeing yourself helpless in success, just as in failure. For above your capacity there is a greater Capacity, and your will is subject to that greater Will in every case. You are not divided into two halves, now capable, now helpless. You are always helpless, only sometimes remembering, sometimes for-

getting. When you remember, then the heart of that moment becomes visible, and the way opens up before you. Indeed, what is our condition, seeing that lions, tigers and crocodiles are all helpless and tremble before God? Even the heavens and earth are helpless and subject to His decree.

God is a mighty emperor. Its Light is not like the light of the moon or sun where some form abides in its place. When God's Light shines forth unveiled, neither heaven nor earth remain. Neither sun nor moon. Nothing remains but that great Reality.

A certain king said to a dervish, "In the moment when you find revelation and propinquity in the Court of God, remember me." The dervish replied, "When I come into that Presence, and the Light of that Sun shines upon me, I will no more remember myself. How then can I remember you?"

Even still, make a request of such a dervish, who is utterly absorbed, and even without them mentioning you or your needs in God's presence still the request is fulfilled.

There was once a king who had a favorite and highly confidential servant. Whenever that servant set out for the royal palace, people who had a request to make presented him with their histories and their letters, begging him to submit them to the king. He would place the documents in his wallet. On coming into the king's presence, he could not endure the splendor of the king's beauty, and would fall down dumfounded. The king would then, in a loving manner, put his hand into his wallet, saying, "What does this servant of mine have here, who is utterly absorbed in my beauty?"

In this way he found the letters and would endorse the petitions of every man and woman, and then return the documents into the wallet. So he would attend to the needs of every one of them, without that servant ever submitting them, so that not a single one was rejected. On the contrary, their demands were granted many times over, and they attained far more than they had asked for. But in the case of other servants who retained consciousness, and were able to present and indicate to the king the histories of the people

in need—out of a hundred requests and a hundred needs, only one might be fulfilled.

discourse 4

Someone said: “There is something I have forgotten.”

Rumi replied: There is one thing in this world that must never be forgotten. If you were to forget all else, but did not forget that, then you would have no reason to worry. But if you performed and remembered everything else, yet forgot that one thing, then you would have done nothing whatsoever.

It is just as if a king sent you to the country to carry out a specific task. If you go and accomplish a hundred other tasks, but do not perform that particular task, then it is as though you performed nothing at all. So, everyone comes into this world for a particular task, and that is their purpose. If they do not perform it, then they will have done nothing.

All things are assigned a task. The heavens send rain and light for the herbs of the field to germinate and spring into life. The earth receives the

seeds and bears fruit, it accepts and reveals a hundred thousand marvels too numerous to tell. The mountains give forth mines of gold and silver. All these things the heavens, the earth and the mountains do, yet they do not perform that one thing; that particular task is performed by us.

"We offered the Trust to the heavens,
The earth and the mountains,
They refused to carry it and were afraid of it,
But humans carried it.
Surely they are foolish and sinful."

So, people are given a task, and when they perform it all their sinfulness and foolishness is dissolved.

You say, "Look at all the work I do accomplish, even if I do not perform that task." You weren't created for those other tasks! It is just as if you were given a sword of priceless Indian steel, such as can only be found in the treasuries of kings, and you were to treat it as a butcher's knife for cutting up putrid meat, saying, "I am not letting this sword stand idle, I am using it in so many useful ways." Or it is like taking a solid gold bowl to cook turnips in, when a single grain of that gold could buy a hundred pots. Or it is as if you

took a Damascene dagger of the finest temper to hang a broken gourd from, saying, "I am making good use of it. I am hanging a gourd on it. I am not letting this dagger go to waste." How foolish that would be! The gourd can hang perfectly well from a wooden or iron nail whose value is a mere farthing, so why use a dagger valued at a hundred pounds?

A poet once said:

You are more precious than heaven and earth.
What more can I say?
You do not know your own worth.

God says, "I will buy you...your moments, your breaths, your possessions, your lives. Spend them on Me. Turn them over to Me, and their price is divine freedom, grace and wisdom. This is your worth in My eyes." But if we keep our life for ourself, then we lose what treasures we have been granted. Like the person who hammered the dagger, worth a hundred pounds into the wall to hang a gourd upon, their great fortune was reduced to a nail.

Still you offer another excuse, saying, "But I apply myself to lofty tasks. I study law, philosophy, logic, astronomy, medicine and the rest."

Well, for whose sake but your own do you study these? If it is law, it is so nobody can steal a loaf from you, strip you of your clothes, or kill you—in short, it is for your own security. If it is astronomy, the phases of the spheres and their influence upon the earth, whether they are light or heavy, portending tranquility or danger, all these things are concerned with your own situation, serving your own ends. If it is medicine, it is related to your own health and also serves you. When you consider this matter well, the root of all your studies is yourself. All these lofty tasks are but branches of you.

If these subjects are filled with so many marvels and worlds of knowledge without end, consider what worlds you pass through who are the root! If your branches have their laws, their medicines, their histories, think of what transpires within you who are the source; what spiritual laws and medicines affect your inward future and fate, what histories portray your struggles of the heart!

For Soul there is other food besides this food of sleeping and eating, but you have forgotten that other food. Night and day you nourish only your body. Now, this body is like a horse, and this

lower world is its stable. The food the horse eats is not the food of the rider. You are the rider and have your own sleeping and eating, your own enjoyment. But since the animal has the upper hand, you lag behind in the horse's stable. You cannot be found among the ranks of kings and princes in the eternal world. Your heart is there, but since your body has the upper hand, you are subject to its rule and remain its prisoner.

When Majnun, as the story goes, was making for his beloved Laila's home, as long as he was fully conscious he drove his camel in that direction. But when for a moment he became absorbed in the thought of Laila and forgot his camel, the camel turned in its tracks toward the village where its foal was kept. On coming to his senses, Majnun found that he had gone back a distance of two day's journey. For three months he continued this way, coming no closer to his goal. Finally he jumped off the camel, saying, "This camel is the ruin of me!" and continued on foot, singing:

My camel's desire is now behind,
My own desire is before.
Our purposes were crossed,
We can agree no more.

Burhan al-Din was once greeted by someone, who said, “I have heard praises of you sung by friends.” Burhan al-Din answered, “Wait until I meet your friends to see whether they know me well enough to praise me. If they know me only by word of mouth, then they do not truly know me. For words do not endure. Syllables and sounds do not endure. This body, these lips and this mouth will not endure. All these things are mere accidents of the moment. But if they know me by my works, and they know my essential self, then I know they are able to praise me, and that praise will go where it belongs.”

This is like the story they tell of a certain king. This king entrusted his son to a team of learned scholars. In due course, they taught him the sciences of astrology, geomancy, and the interpretation of signs, until he became a complete master, despite his utter stupidity and dullness of wit.

One day the king took a ring in his fist and put his son to the test.

“Come, tell me what I am holding in my fist.”

“What you are holding is round, yellow, inscribed and hollow,” the prince answered.

"You have given all the signs correctly," the king said. "Now say what it is."

"It must be a sieve." the prince replied.

"What?" cried the king. "You know all the minute details, which would baffle the minds of anyone. How is it that out of all your powerful learning and knowledge, the small point has escaped you that a sieve will not fit in a fist?"

In this same way, the great scholars of the age split hairs on details of all matters. They know perfectly and completely those sciences that do not concern Soul. But as for what is truly of importance and touches us more closely than anything else, namely our own Self, this your great scholars do not know. They make statements about everything, saying, "This is true and that is not true. This is right and that is wrong." Yet, they do not know their own Self, whether it is true or false, pure or impure.

Now being hollow and yellow, inscribed and circular, these features are accidental; cast the ring into the fire and none of them will remain. It becomes its essential self, purified of all appearances. So it is with the knowledge of scholars;

what they know has no connection with the essential reality that alone exists when all these "signs" are gone. They speak wisely, expound at great length, and finally pronounce that what the king has in his hand is a sieve. They have no knowledge about the root of the matter: life's purpose.

I am a bird. I am a nightingale. If they say to me, "Make some other kind of sound," I cannot. My tongue is what it is. I cannot speak otherwise. However, those who learn the song of birds are not birds themselves—on the contrary, they are the enemies of birds and their captors. They sing and whistle so others will take them for birds. Ask them to produce a different sound and they can do so, because that sound is merely assumed by them. It is not truly their own. Like the scholars, they are able to sing other songs because they have learned to rob those songs, and to show off a different tune stolen from every breast.

discourse 5

The Amir, surprised by an unexpected visit from Rumi, said: "Master, how gracious of you to honor me in this way. I never expected this. It never even entered my mind that I could be worthy of such an honor. By rights I should be standing night and day in the ranks and company of your servants and attendants. I'm not even worthy of that. How gracious this is!"

Rumi said: It is all because of your lofty spiritual aspirations. The higher and greater your rank and the more you become occupied with important, exalted worldly affairs, the more you consider yourself to have fallen short of your spiritual purpose. You are not satisfied with what you have achieved, thinking that you have too many obligations. Since none of these attainments can blind you from that divine attainment, my heart is moved to serving you. And yet for all that, still, I wanted to pay you formal honor as well.

Form too possesses great importance. No, much more than importance—it is of true sub-

stance. Just as the body will fail if it lacks a heart, so too it fails without a skin. If you plant a seed with no husk, it cannot grow, but if you bury it in the earth with its shell, then it germinates and becomes a great tree. So, form is a great and necessary principle, and without it our task fails and our purpose is not attained. Yes, this principle is reality in the eyes of those who know reality and have become reality!

A dervish once entered the presence of a king. The king addressed him, "Oh, ascetic."

"You are the ascetic," the dervish answered.

"How can I be an ascetic," the king demanded, "since the whole world belongs to me?"

"Ah, you see things the opposite of what they are," replied the dervish. "This world and the next and all that there is to possess, these all belong to me. I have seized the whole world. It is you who have become satisfied with a mouthful and a rag."

Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God. This Face runs and extends infinitely and forever. True spiritual lovers have sacrificed themselves for the sake of that Face, desiring nothing in return. The rest of the human race are like cattle.

Yet, even though they are cattle, still they deserve favor. They may live in the stable, yet they are accepted by the Lord of the stable. If He so desires, He transfers them from this stable into His private pen. So, in the beginning God brought men and women into existence, and then transferred them from the pen of spiritual existence into the world inanimate. Then from the pen of the world inanimate into the vegetable world. Then from vegetable into animal. From animal to human, human to angel, and so on forever. He manifested all these forms so that you would know His pens are many, and that each one is loftier than the next.

God revealed this present world so that you could accept the other stages that lie ahead. He did not reveal it so that you would say, "This is all there is." The masters of crafts demonstrate their abilities and arts so their apprentices will find faith in them, and will believe in the other arts they have not yet demonstrated. A king bestows robes of honor and lavishes kindness on his subjects because they look forward to receiving other gifts from him, and hang hopefully upon future

purses of gold. He does not grant these things for them to say, "This is all there is. The king will not give out any other blessings," and so make do with that amount. If the king knows any subjects are going to say that, and take such gifts for granted, he will never bestow any blessings whatsoever upon them.

The ascetic is one who sees the hereafter, while the worldling sees only the stable. But the chosen ones of God, who have true knowledge, see neither the hereafter nor the stable. Their eyes are fixed on the first principle, the source of all things. When the chosen one sows wheat they know that wheat will grow, because they see the end from the beginning. So it is with barley and rice and all things—seeing the beginning, their eyes are not fixed on the end. They know the conclusion from the start. Such men and women are rare.

It is pain that guides us in every enterprise. Until there is an ache within, a passion and a yearning for that thing arising within us, we will never strive to attain it. Without pain it remains beyond our reach, whether it is success in this world or salvation in the next, whether we aim at

becoming a merchant or a king, a scientist or an astronomer. It was not until the pains of birth manifested in Mary that she made for the tree. Those pangs drove her to the tree, and the tree that was withered became fruitful.

We are like that story of Mary in the Koran. Every one of us has a Jesus within, but until the pangs manifest, our Jesus is not born. If the pangs never come, then our child rejoins its origin by the same secret path through which it came, leaving us empty, without the birth of our true self.

Your inward soul is hungry.
Your outward flesh is over fed.
The devil has gorged to sickness.
The king begs even for bread.
The cure is found while Jesus is here on earth!
But once he returns to heaven,
all hope will have fled.

discourse 6

Rumi said: These words are for the sake of those who need words to understand. But as for those who understand without words, what use have they for speech? The heavens and earth are words to them, sent forth themselves from the Word of God. Whoever hears a whisper, what need have they for shouting and screaming?

An Arabic speaking poet once came into the presence of a king. Now the king was a Turk, and did not even know Persian. The poet had composed in his honor some brilliant verses in Arabic, and had brought these with him. When the king had taken his seat on the throne and the courtiers were all present and duly stationed, commanders and ministers each in their place, the poet rose to his feet and began to recite his poem. At every passage deserving applause the king nodded his head, while at every passage provoking astonishment he looked amazed. Similarly, he responded to every passage expressing submission. The courtiers were astounded.

"Our king did not know a word of Arabic," they murmured amongst themselves. "How is it that he nodded his head so correctly? He must have known Arabic all these years and kept it hidden from us. If we have ever uttered incivilities in Arabic, then woe is us!"

Now the king had a favorite slave. So the courtiers assembled together and gave the slave a horse, a mule, and a sum of money, and they promised to give him this much again. "Just find out whether or not the king knows Arabic," they said to him. "If he does not, how was it that he nodded just at the right places? Was it a miracle? Was it divine inspiration?"

Finally one day the slave found his opportunity. The king was out hunting, and the slave perceived that he was in a good mood, since the hunt had gone well. So he asked the king point blank. The king burst out laughing.

"By God, I don't know Arabic," he said. "As for nodding and applauding, I knew of course what the poet's object was in composing that poem, and so I nodded and applauded."

So it was realized that the root of the matter was the purpose desired; the poem itself was

merely the branch of that purpose. If it had not been for that purpose, the poet would never have composed that poem.

If our real purpose is kept in view, duality vanishes. Duality shows the branches, but the root is one. It is the same with Sufi sheikhs. Although to outward appearance they have various styles of teaching and differ widely in their social standing, even in their action and words, yet from the standpoint of their purpose they all have one goal, namely the quest for God.

Take the case of the wind. When it blows through a house it lifts the edges of the carpet, and the rugs flap and move about. It whisks sticks and straws into the air, ruffles the surface of the pool until it looks like a coat of mail, sets trees and twigs and leaves a-dancing. All those conditions appear distinct and different, yet from the standpoint of the object, the root and reality, they are one thing—the movement of the wind.

Someone said: "I have neglected that true purpose."

Rumi replied: When this thought enters a person's mind and they criticize themself, saying, "What am I about, and why do I do these

things?" When this happens, it is a sure proof that God loves them and cares for them. "Love continues so long as reprimands continue," said the poet. We may reprimand our friends, but we never reprimand a stranger.

Now there are levels of reprimand. When a person is stung by it and sees the truth in it, that is a sign that God loves them and cares for them. But if the reprimand flies by that person without causing any pain at all, then this is no sign of love. When a carpet is beaten to get rid of the dust, intelligent people do not call that a reprimand. But if a woman beats her own darling child, then that is called a reprimand and is a proof of her love. Therefore, as long as you find pain and regret within yourself, that is a proof of God's love and guidance.

If you find fault in your brother or sister, the fault you see in them is within yourself. The true Sufi is like a mirror where you see your own image, for "The believer is a mirror of their fellow believers." Get rid of those faults in yourself, because what bothers you in them bothers you in yourself.

An elephant was led to a well to drink. Seeing itself in the water, it shied away. It thought it was shying away from another elephant. It did not realize it was shying away from its own self.

All evil qualities—oppression, hatred, envy, greed, mercilessness, pride—when they are within yourself, they bring no pain. When you see them in another, then you shy away and feel the pain. We feel no disgust at our own scab and abscess. We will dip our infected hand into our food and lick our fingers without turning in the least bit squeamish. But if we see a tiny abscess or half a scratch on another's hand, we shy away from that person's food and have no stomach for it whatsoever. Evil qualities are just like scabs and abscesses; when they are within us they cause no pain, but when we see them even to a small degree in another, then we feel pain and disgust.

Just as you shy away from your brother or sister, so you should excuse them for shying away from you. The pain you feel comes from those faults, and they see the same faults. The seeker of truth is a mirror for their neighbors. But those who cannot feel the sting of truth are not mirrors

to anyone but themselves.

A certain king was sitting, dejected, on the bank of a river. The generals were nervous and afraid of him. His face would not clear up no matter what they tried. Now he had a jester whom he treated as a great favorite. The generals promised the jester a certain sum of money if he could make the king laugh. So the jester approached the king, but despite all his efforts the king would not so much as look at him. The king kept staring into the river and did not lift his head at all.

"What do you see in the water?" the jester asked the king.

"I see the husband of an unfaithful wife," the king replied.

"King of the world," the jester said, "your slave is also not blind."

So it is in your own case. If you see something in your fellow that pains you, after all they also are not blind. They see exactly what you see.

In God's presence two I's cannot exist. You cannot know your self and God's Self; either die before God, or God will die before you so that

duality will not remain. But as for God's dying, that is both impossible and inconceivable, for God is the Living, the Immortal. So gracious is He that if it were at all possible He would die for your sake. Since that is not possible, then you must die so that God can reveal Itself to you, and duality can vanish.

Tie two birds together, and despite their familiarity and the fact that their two wings have been changed to four, they will not fly. That is because duality exists. But let one bird give up its life and the other—even though tied to the first—will fly, because duality has vanished.

Shams-i-Tabriz was a servant of God who had the power to sacrifice himself for the sake of a friend. He prayed to God for that friend, but God did not accept his petition. "I do not want you to help him," came a voice. Shams, that son of the Sun [Shams-i-Tabriz means literally Sun of Tabriz,] persisted and would not cease his requests, saying, "O God, you have implanted this desire for him, and it will not leave me." Finally a voice came saying, "Do you desire that this should come to pass? Then sacrifice your self,

and become nothing. Do not wait, and leave this world behind." "Lord," Shams answered, "I am content." So he did; he gambled away his life for the sake of that Friend, and his desire was accomplished. [The friend in this story is Rumi himself. Shams was chased away by jealous followers of Rumi, but Rumi sent for Shams and Shams eventually returned. It is said that those jealous followers, including one of Rumi's own sons, later murdered Shams. Rumi's search for the missing Shams, only to find the One he sought for within himself, is the source of many of Rumi's poems.]

If a servant of God can possess such grace as to sacrifice his life, of which one day's portion is worth the life of all the world from first to last, does not the Source of that grace also possess this love? It would be absurd to think otherwise. But since it is not possible for God to pass away, at least you can.

A fool came and sat in a seat above one of the great saints. What difference does it make to the saints whether such a person is above or below the lamp? If the lamp wants to be on high, it does not desire that for its own sake. Its purpose is for

the benefit of others, so they can enjoy their share of the light. Wherever the lamp may be, whether below or above, it is still the lamp of the Eternal Sun. If the saint seeks worldly rank and office, it is for this purpose: They desire to snare those worldlings, who do not have the vision to see their true elevation, with a trap of worldly rank. Through this they may find their way to the higher worlds, and fall into the trap of divine grace.

In this same way, the Prophet, Mohammed did not conquer Mecca and the surrounding lands because he was in need of them. He conquered in order to give life and grant light to all people. "This is a hand accustomed to give, it is not accustomed to take." The saints beguile people in order to bestow gifts on them, not to take anything away.

When someone lays a trap and catches little birds to eat and sell, that is called cunning. But if a king lays a trap to capture an untutored and worthless hawk, having no knowledge of its own true nature, to train it to his own forearm so that it may become ennobled, that is not called cunning. Though to outward appearance it is cun-

ning, yet it is known to be the very acme of caring and generosity, restoring the dead to life, converting the base stone into a ruby, and far more than that. If the hawk knew for what reason the king wanted to capture it, it would not require any bait. It would search for the trap with soul and heart, and would fly to the king's hand.

People only listen to the outward significance of the saints' words. They say, "We've heard plenty of this. Our hearts are stuffed full of words of this kind." God says, "God forbid that you should be full of them! You are full of your own whisperings and vain conceits. You are full of illusion and greed. Nay, you are full of cursing."

If only they were empty of such ravings! Then they would be open to receive these words. But they are not open to receive them. God has set a seal upon their ears and eyes and hearts. Their eyes see things the opposite of what they are; they hear wisdom as gibberish and raving. Their hearts have been transformed into a home of self-love and vanity. A winter's tangle of dark shapes and pride has possessed them. Their hearts are hardened with ice and frost.

"God has set a seal on their hearts
And their hearing,
And on their eyes is a covering."

How likely is it that such people could be full of these true words? They have never caught so much as a whiff of them. They have never tasted a drop in all their lives—neither they nor those they worship, nor their miserable household. God shows a pitcher to everyone. To some It shows the pitcher full of water, and they drink until they are sated. But to some God shows it empty. What thanks can someone give for an empty pitcher? Only those, whom God shows the pitcher full, find thanks for this gift.

discourse 7

The son of the Amir entered.Rumi said: Your father is always occupied with God. His faith is overwhelming, and reveals itself in his words. One day your father said, "The people of Rum have urged me to give my daughter in marriage to the Tartars, so that our religion may become one, and this new religion of Muslimdom can disappear."

I said, "When has religion ever been one? There have always been two or three, and they have always had war and fighting between them. How do you expect to make religion one? It will be one only in the next world, at the resurrection. As for this present world, it isn't possible here, for here each religion has a different desire and design. Here unity is impossible. It will be possible only at the resurrection, when humanity becomes one and all people fix their eyes on one place, and all have one ear and one tongue."

Within us are many things. There is mouse in us, and there is bird. The bird carries the cage

upwards, while the mouse drags it down. A hundred thousand different wild beasts are together within us, but they are all converging on that moment when the mouse will renounce its mousehood and the bird its birdhood, and all become one. For the goal is neither going up or down. When the goal shows itself clearly, it will be neither above nor below.

A woman lost something. She looks left and right, in front and behind. Once she has found that thing she no longer searches above and below, left and right, in front or behind. All at once she becomes calm and collected. Similarly, on the resurrection day all people will be of one eye, tongue, ear and understanding.

When ten friends share a garden or a shop in common, they speak as one, they plan as one, and their work is with one thing since their objective is the same. So, on the resurrection day, since the affair of all will be with God, they will all be one.

In this world everyone is preoccupied with a separate affair. One is in love with women, one is in love with wealth, another is engaged in acquiring possessions, another in acquiring knowledge. Everyone believes that their cure, their joy, their

pleasure and comfort can be found in that one thing. And that is a Divine mercy, because when they search they cannot find, and so they return. After they have waited a while, they say again, "That joy and pleasure must be looked for. Perhaps I didn't try hard enough. I will search again." Then they look again, but still they cannot find their desire. So they continue, until that time when Truth removes Its veil. Then they know.

But God has certain servants who know even before the resurrection. Ali [cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed] said, "Even if the veil was removed, my faith would not increase." That is to say, "Even when the body is gone and the resurrection appears, my certainty can become no greater." This is like a group of people at prayer on a dark night; they turn their faces in every direction, being unable to see. When day comes they all turn themselves around, except for that one individual who through the night was facing towards Mecca. Why should that individual turn around? So, those special servants of God keep their faces towards the One even in the night, and

have turned their faces away from all else. Therefore, for them, the resurrection is already manifest and present.

There is no end to words, but they are given according to the capacity of the seeker.

Wisdom is like the rain. Its supply is unlimited, but it comes down according to what the occasion requires—in winter and spring, in summer and autumn, always in due measure, more or less, but the source of that rain is the oceans itself, which has no limits. Druggists put sugar or drugs in a twist of paper, but sugar is not limited by the amount in the paper. The stocks of sugar and the stocks of drugs are unlimited and unbounded; how can a piece of paper contain them?

Some people uttered taunts at Mohammed, saying, "Why does the Koran come down upon you word by word? Why not chapter by chapter?" Mohammed answered, "What do these fools say? If it were to come down upon me all at once, I would dissolve and vanish away."

Those who truly understand a little, understand much; of one thing, many things; of one line, whole volumes. It is like when a group is

seated listening to a story, but one woman knows all the circumstances, having been there when it occurred. From the first hint she understands it all. She turns pale, then crimson, changing from one feeling to another. The others understand only as much as they hear, since they do not know what really happened. But the one who knows understands the whole story from even a few words.

To return: When you come to the druggist, they have sugar in abundance. But they see how much money you brought, and give accordingly. By "money" is meant sincerity and faith. The words are imparted according to one's sincerity and faith. When you come seeking sugar, they examine your bag to see what its capacity is, then they measure out accordingly, one bushel or two. But if someone brings a string of camels, they call the weighmen to be help.

So, someone comes along whom oceans do not satisfy; another finds a few drops enough and any more would be harmful.

This applies not only to the world of ideas, sciences and wisdom. It is true of everything.

Property, wealth, gold, all are unbounded and infinite, but they are imparted according to the capacity of the individual. Who could support an endless supply without being driven mad? Do you not see how Majnun and Farhad, and the other famous lovers, took to the mountain and desert for the love of a woman, when they were filled with a passion beyond their power to control? Do you not see how Pharaoh, when empire and wealth were showered upon him without end, laid claim to being a god?

Yes, indeed these people have faith, but they do not know what that faith is in. In the same way a child has faith it will have bread to eat, but they don't know where this bread comes from. It is the same with all things that grow. A tree turns yellow and dry of thirst, but it doesn't know what thirst really is.

Our faith is like a flag. First we set the flag fluttering in the air to proclaim our belief, and then send troops to the foot of that flag from every direction to support and defend it. We send reason, understanding, fury and anger, forbearance and liberality, fear and hope, on and on

without end. Whoever looks from afar sees only the flag, but those who see from close at hand know the essences and realities that reside within us.

Someone came in and Rumi said: Where have you been? We have been longing to see you. Why have you stayed away?

The visitor replied, "It was just how things conspired."

Rumi said: We, for our part, have been praying that this conspiracy of things might come to an end. A conspiracy of things that produces separation is an improper conspiracy. Yes, by God, it too comes from God, and in relation to God is good. It is a true saying, that all things are good and perfect in relation to God, but in relation to us, how can this be true? Fornication and purity, avoiding prayer and praying, unbelief and Islam, idolatry and God's unity—with God all these are good. But to us, fornication and thieving, unbelief and idolatry are bad, while God's unity and prayer are good. Even though in relation to God all are good.

A king has in his realm prisons and gallows, robes of honor and wealth, estates and attendants in waiting, feasting and celebration, drums and flags. In relation to the king all these things are good. Just as robes of honor are the perfect flourish for his kingdom, in the same way gallows and prisons are perfect ornaments. In relation to him all these things are perfect, but in relation to his people how could robes of honor and the gallows be one and the same?

discourse 8

Someone asked: "What is greater than prayer?"

Rumi said: One answer is that the soul of prayer is greater than prayer, as I have already explained. A second answer is that faith is greater.

Prayer is a series of daily actions, while faith is continuous. Prayer can be dropped for a valid reason, or can be postponed, but it is impossible to drop or postpone faith for any excuse. And where prayer without faith gains nothing, as in the case of hypocrites, faith without prayer is valuable. Another point: while the prayer of every religion is each quite different, still, faith does not change from religion to religion. The states that it produces, its place in life, and its effects are the same everywhere.

There are other advantages to faith, but their discovery depends upon the inward awareness of the listener. Each listener is like flour in the hands of a dough-maker. Words are like water sprinkled on the flour according to the moisture needed. But unless the water soaks in, it cannot make dough.

A poet said:

My eye is fixed upon another, what shall I do?
Look to yourself, for that eye's light is you.

"My eye is fixed upon another." That means you are seeking something apart from yourself, like the dryness of the flour that longs for water from the dough-maker's hand. "What can I do?" Know that you seek only yourself, that longing is for you. The light you seek is your own light reflected, but you will not escape this blinding glare of the outward lights until your own Inner Light becomes a hundred thousand times greater.

There was once a skinny person, feeble as a sparrow, and exceedingly ugly. He was so ugly that even other ugly people looked on him with contempt and gave thanks to God, though before seeing him they used to complain of their own ugliness. Yet, for all that, he was very rude in his way of speaking and bragged enormously. He was in the court of the king, and his behavior pained the vizier, but the vizier swallowed it down. Then one day the vizier lost his temper.

"People of the court," he shouted. "I picked this creature out of the gutter and nourished him. By eating my bread and sitting at my table, by

enjoying my charity and my wealth, and that of my ancestors, he became somebody. Now he has reached the point of saying such things to me!"

"People of the court," cried the man, springing up in the vizier's face, "and nobles and pillars of the state! What he says is quite true. I was nourished by his wealth and charity and that of his ancestors until I grew up, contemptible and crude as you see me. If I had been nourished by someone else's bread and wealth, surely my appearance, my manners and my worth would have been better than this. He picked me out of the gutter; but all I can say is; Oh, I wish that I were dust. If someone else had picked me out of the gutter, I would not have been such a laughing stock."

The disciple, who is fed at the table of a lover of God, has a clean and true spirit. But those who are nourished by the hands of an imposter and a braggart, learning the science from them, become just like their teacher, contemptible and feeble, weak and unable to make up their minds about anything.

Within our being all sciences were originally joined as one, so that our spirit displayed all hid-

den things, like clear water shows everything within it—pebbles, broken shards and the like—and reflects the sky above from its surface like a mirror. This is Soul's true nature, without treatment or training. But once Soul has mingled with the earth and its earthly elements, this clarity leaves it and is forgotten. So God sends forth the prophets and saints, like a great translucent ocean that accepts all waters, and yet no matter how dark or dirty are the rivers that pour into it, that ocean remains pure. Then Soul remembers. When it sees its reflection in that unsullied water, it knows for sure that in the beginning it too was pure, and these shadows and colors are mere accidents.

The prophets and the saints, therefore, remind us of our original state; they do not implant anything new. Now, every water, no matter how dark, that recognizes that great water, saying, "I come from this and I belong to this," is truly a part of that ocean. But the dark elements that do not recognize that ocean and believe they are kin to another kind, they make their home with the colors and shadows of the earth.

It was for this reason that the Prophet said, "Now there comes to you a Messenger from amongst yourselves." In other words, the great ocean is that same substance as your own water, it is all from one self and one source. But for those elements that do not feel the attraction of familiarity, this failure does not come from the water itself, but from the pollution in that water. This pollution is mixed in so closely that the water does not know whether its own shying away from the ocean comes from itself, or from the essence of that pollution. And so, evil men do not know whether their attraction toward evil springs from their own nature, or from some dark element mingled in.

Every line of poetry the saints and prophets bring forth, every tradition, every verse they write, is like a witness bearing testimony. They bear witness to every situation according to the nature of the situation. In the same way we have two witnesses at the inheritance of a house, two witnesses at the sale of a shop, two witnesses at a marriage. So too, the saints bear witness. The inner form of their testimony is always the same;

it is the outer meaning that differs. I pray that God may cause these words to bear witness to God and you alike.

discourse 9

Someone said: "A man came who wanted to see you. He kept saying, 'I wish I could have seen the Master."

Rumi said: He does not see the Master at this moment because in truth the desire that filled him, namely to see the Master, was a veil hiding the Master. So it is with all desires and affections, all loves and fondnesses that people have for every variety of thing—father, mother, heaven, earth, gardens, palaces, knowledge, things to eat and drink. The lover of God realizes all these desires are truly the desire for God, and they are all veils covering humanity's eyes. When we pass into the next world and behold Reality without these veils, then we realize all those were veils and coverings, and that our true quest in reality is for one thing. All difficulties are then resolved, we hear in our hearts the answer to all questions, and everything is seen clearly face to face.

It is not God's way to answer every problem separately, but with one answer all questions are

satisfied. All at once the total struggle is resolved. In the same way, in winter everyone puts on warm clothes and a leather jacket, and then creeps for shelter from the cold. So too all plants, trees, and shrubs, bitten by the cold, remain without leaves and fruit, storing and hiding their goods and nourishment inwardly so that the grasp of winter will not reach them. When spring, in a single epiphany, answers their requests, then all their various problems, whether human, animal or plant, are resolved, and those secondary symptoms disappear. Then all put forth their heads, and realize the cause of their misery.

God has created these veils for a good purpose. For if God's beauty were displayed without a veil, we would not have the power to endure it. Through the intermediary of these veils we derive life and enjoyment.

Look at the sun. Through its light we can distinguish good from bad, and find warmth. Trees and orchards become fruitful from its heat, and their fruits—unripe, sour and bitter, become mature and sweet. Through its influence, mines of gold and silver, rubies and carnelians are produced. But if the sun were to come nearer it

would bring no benefit whatsoever. On the contrary, the whole world and every creature would be burned up and destroyed.

When God reveals Itself through a veil to the mountain, those slopes become fully arrayed in trees and flowers and verdure. However, when God brings revelation without a veil, It destroys the mountain and breaks it into atoms.

Someone asked: "Well, isn't this the same sun in the winter?"

Rumi answered: Our purpose here was to draw a comparison. It is not a matter of atoms, or Adam. Similarity is one thing, comparison is another. Although our mind cannot comprehend that reality, yet how can mind abandon the effort? If our reason gave up the struggle, it would no longer be reason. Reason is that thing that perpetually, night and day, is restless while thinking and struggling, striving to comprehend, even though God is unknowable and incomprehensible.

Reason is like a moth, and the Beloved is like a candle. Whenever the moth dashes itself against the candle, it is consumed and destroyed, but the

moth is this way by nature. No matter how much that consuming flame and agony may hurt, the moth cannot fly from the candle. If there were another creature like the moth that could not fly away from the light of the candle, and dashed itself against that light, that would not be a mere comparison, that would be a moth itself. But if the moth dashed itself against the light of the candle and the moth were not consumed, that indeed could not be a candle.

Therefore, the human being who can do without God, lacking even the desire, that is no human being at all. But if they are able to comprehend God, that indeed could not be God. So, the true lover is never free from striving, they revolve restlessly and ceaselessly around the light of God. And God consumes them, making them nothing, destroying the veil of their reason.

discourse 10

The Amir said to Rumi: “Before you arrived just now, your eldest son, Baha al-Din, excused himself to me, saying, ‘My father said that he doesn’t want to put you to any trouble when you come to visit him. He says, “I am subject to various states of consciousness. In one state I speak, and in another I do not. In one state I attend to the affairs of others, and in another state I withdraw and go into retreat, while in yet another state I am utterly absorbed and beyond this world. I do not wish the Amir to come when I’m in a state of being that is disagreeable, when I am unable to counsel and converse with him. Therefore, it is better that when I am free and able to attend

to my friends and do them some good, that I should go out and visit them.”’”

The Amir went on: “I answered Baha al-Din, saying, ‘I do not come here so that our Master should attend to me and converse with me. My purpose in coming is to have the honor of being

amongst the company of his servants.' For example, just now you were preoccupied and did not show yourself until you had kept me waiting for a long time. This was so I would realize how difficult and disagreeable it is if I keep others waiting when they come to my door and I do not readily admit them. You have made me taste the bitterness of that and have given me a lesson so that I will not act like that with others."

Rumi answered: That's not true. On the contrary, my keeping you waiting is an expression of utmost loving-kindness. Just as God declares, "O my child, I would answer your smallest petition and slightest complaint without delay, if it weren't that the voice of your complaint is so sweet to my ears. My answer lingers unspoken in hopes that you might complain again and again, for the sound of your voice is so sweet to me."

For example, two beggars come to the door of a certain person. One is highly loved and sought after, while the other is disliked. The owner of the house says to a slave, "Give that hated one a piece of bread quickly and without delay, so he will leave right away." To the other beloved beggar

the owner makes promises, saying, "The bread is not yet baked. Wait patiently until the bread is properly cooked and baked."

My greater desire is to see my friends, to gaze my fill upon them and they on me. For when friends see deeply into one another here, below, and they are raised into the other world after become very familiar here, they quickly recognize one another there. Knowing how closely they were together in the world of mortality, their reuniting brings great joy.

For all too quickly we lose our friends. Do you not see how in this mortal world you become the friend and darling of some person, and they become the very Joseph of beauty in your eyes. Then, on account of a single shameful act they vanish from your sight, and you lose them completely? That Joseph-like form is changed into a wolf. This very same one you once saw as Joseph you now see as a wolf. Yet, their actual form has not changed, but is still the same as it always was. By that one accidental act you lost them. Tomorrow, when this present essence is changed

into another essence, since you never really knew that person deeply, and never penetrated thoroughly into their essence, how are you going to recognize them?

The lesson to be learned from this is that we must see one another very well indeed. We must pass beyond the good and bad qualities that are present temporarily in everyone, and must enter into the other's very essence. We must see with exceptional clarity that these qualities people observe in one another are not their original qualities.

The story is told of a man, who said, "I know that fellow very well. I will give his distinguishing mark." His friends said, "Please do." The man answered, "He was a muleteer of mine. He had two black cows." People talk in this same way. "I consider So-and-so my friend. I know them." Yet every distinguishing mark they give is just like the two black cows. Those are not distinguishing marks. Those marks are of no use whatever.

So, we must pass beyond the good and evil in others and enter into their essence to see what

they really are. That is truly seeing and knowing.

It astonishes me how some people say, "How do saints and lovers of God find love in the eternal world beyond form, space and time? How can they gain strength and help? How are they affected by things without body or shape?"

Is not all life, night and day, engaged with these very things? One person loves another person and derives help through that love. They find care and grace, kindness and knowledge, happiness and sorrow. All these belong to that formless world. Moment by moment they receive benefits from these abstractions and are affected by them. However, this doesn't surprise the doubters. Yet they are amazed that saints can find love in the invisible worlds, and derive help without form.

Once there was a philosopher who denied this reality. One day he became so sick he could not leave his bed, and his illness dragged on a long time. A certain theologian went to visit him.

"What are you seeking?" the theologian asked.

"Health," said the philosopher.

"Tell me how this health is shaped, so that I may find it for you."

"It has no shape," said the philosopher. "It is indescribable."

"If it is indescribable, then how can you look for it?" the theologian demanded.

"All I know," answered the philosopher, "is that when health arrives I grow in strength. I become plump, fresh and alive."

"From illness we learn of health," said the theologian. "From what is describable we learn of what is indescribable. Now abandon your doubting ways and I will return you to your vital self."

Though spiritual truth is inscrutable, still we all benefit from it through the embodiment of form. Just as you see the changes brought by the stars, moon and sun turning in the sky, the rain from clouds in due season, summer and winter, and all the transformations of time. You see all these things happen, and know that it is right and in accordance with wisdom. But how does that distant cloud know it is necessary to rain at its appointed time? Or how does this earth, when it receives a seed, know to return it tenfold? Well, Someone does this. Behold that Someone through the embodiment of this world, and find nourish-

ment. Just as you use the body of another person to contact their essence, use the embodiment of this world to touch That reality.

When the Prophet was transported out of himself and spoke, he used to say, "God says." Now, from the standpoint of embodiment, it was his tongue that spoke; but he wasn't there at all. That speaker was greater than he was. Mohammed, knowing himself to be ignorant and without knowledge of such words, when he heard the wisdom coming through his own lips, he realized that he was no longer what he had been. Something greater moved him. He reported stories about past people and prophets who lived thousands of years before, and he told what would come to pass even to the end of the world. His being was but a thing of years. A mortal being surely can't describe such things. How can a creature born in time give information about the eternal? And so it became known that it was not he who was speaking. God was speaking.

God is wholly free of form and words. Its speech is beyond letters and voice. Yet, It delivers Its message by any letters and voice and tongue It desires.

People have carved the figures of men, women and birds of stone along the banks of pools on the highways and in the caravansaries, and through the mouths of those statues water pours into the pool. Anyone with any sense knows that this water does not begin in the mouth of a stone bird, it comes from some other source.

If you want to get to know people, engage them in speech. By their words you will know them. If they are imposters, even if someone told them that people can be recognized by their words and they watch their words carefully to avoid being caught, still, in the end you will come to understand who they are.

This is illustrated by the story of the child and her mother. A child in the desert said to her mother, "On dark nights a horrible demon appears to me, and I am terribly afraid."

"Don't be afraid," said her mother. "The next time you see that form, attack it bravely. Then you see clearly that it is nothing but a fantasy."

"But mother," said the child, "what if the horrible demon's mother has given him similar advice? What shall I do if she has taught him, saying, 'Don't give in, so she will think you are real

and powerful. And don't say a word, so that you won't be exposed?' How shall I recognize him then?"

"Keep silent, yield to his form as it is, and wait with patience," her mother answered. "Sooner or later some word will leap from his mouth. Or if it does not, from your own heart some words will spring forth unconsciously, or into your mind some thoughts or ideas will spring up, so that out of those thoughts you will know him for what he is. For this is how he has affected you. This is a reflection of his true self and his real feelings that have sprung up inside of you."

Sheikh Sar-razi was seated one day amongst his disciples. One of the disciples had a longing for some roasted sheep's head. The Sheikh called to his servant, saying, "Bring him some roasted sheep's head."

"How did you know that he wanted roasted sheep's head?" the disciples asked.

"Because it is now thirty years since such desires have filled me," the Sheikh answered. "I have cleansed and purified myself of all desires and have become clear as a polished mirror. When

the thought of roasted sheep's head entered my mind, whetted my appetite and became a desire, I knew it belonged to our friend. For a mirror shows no image of itself. Any image it reflects is the image of another."

A worthy man once shut himself in a cave for forty days discipline, seeking spiritual enlightenment. A voice came to him, saying, "Such a lofty goal will never be attained by forty days discipline. Abandon your cave so the love of a great saint may reach you and your goal can be realized."

"Where shall I find that great one?" the man asked.

"In the congregational mosque," came the answer.

"In such a throng of people, how shall I recognize which one he is?" he inquired.

"Go," said the voice, "he will recognize you and will gaze upon you. The sign that his love has fallen upon you will be when the pitcher drops from your hand and you become unconscious. Then you will know that his gaze has reached you."

The man acted accordingly. He filled a pitcher with water and went around the congregation in the mosque like a water-carrier. He was wandering between the ranks of the worshippers when suddenly he was seized with ecstasy. He uttered a loud cry, and the pitcher fell from his hand. He remained in a corner of the mosque unconscious. All the people left. When he came to his senses he saw that he was alone. He could not see the spiritual king who had gazed upon him, but he had gained his goal.

There are certain lovers of God, who, because of their great majesty and jealousy for God, do not show themselves openly, but they cause disciples to attain important goals and bestow gifts upon them. Such mighty spiritual saints are rare and precious.

Someone said: "Do the great ones come before you?"

Rumi answered: There is no "before" left to me. It has been a long time since I have had any "before." If they come, they come before an image they believe to be me. Some people said to Jesus, "We will come to your house." Jesus

replied, “Where is my house in this world, and how could I have a house?”

It is related that Jesus was wandering in the desert when a great rainstorm broke. He went to take shelter in the den of a jackal, in the corner of its cave, until the rain ceased. A revelation came to him, saying, “Get out of the jackal’s den, for the jackal’s little ones cannot rest on account of you.” He cried aloud, “Lord, the jackal’s pups have a shelter, but the son of Mary has no place to call home.”

Although the jackal’s whelp has a cave to live in, still it has no Beloved to drive it out of its home. But you do have such a One driving you out. If you have no home, what does that matter? The loving-kindness of such a Driver, and the grace from such a robe of honor that singles you out to be driven forth, is worth far more, exceeding a hundred thousand heavens and worlds here and beyond.

After the Amir left, Rumi said: The fact that the Amir came and I didn’t show my face at once should not worry him. His purpose in coming was either to pay honor to me or to himself. If it was

to pay honor to me, then the longer he sat and waited, the greater the honor he gained. If, on the other hand, his object was to honor himself and to seek a reward, then since he waited and endured the pain of waiting his reward will be all the greater. In either case his object in coming was realized many times over, so he should feel thankful and fortunate.

discourse 11

Rumi said: The saying, “Hearts bear witness to one another,” refers to a hidden reality. If all reality were openly revealed, what need would there be for words? Similarly, when the heart bears witness, what need is there for the testimony of the tongue?

The Amir said: “Certainly the heart bears witness. But the heart plays one part by itself, the ear another, the eye another, the tongue another. There is need for each one, so that the whole can be realized.”

Rumi said: If the heart is totally absorbed, then all the other senses are obliterated in it, and there is no need for the tongue. Take the case of Laila: She was not a spiritual being, but of flesh, fashioned of water and clay. Yet passion for her produced such absorption, and so utterly seized and overwhelmed Majnun, that he had no need to see Laila with his eyes, no need to hear her voice. He

could not separate himself from the thought of her, causing him to cry:

Your name is upon my tongue.
Your image is in my sight.
Your memory in my heart,
Where can I send these words I write?

The physical has such power that passion can bring us into a state where we are never apart from our beloved. All our senses are absorbed: sight, hearing, smell and the rest. No sense seeks a separate view, all being united. If each sense plays its part in full, all are immersed in one experience and desire nothing else. Seeking for a separate view proves that one sense has not found its true, whole allotment. It is enjoying an incomplete portion and therefore is not immersed, nor fulfilled. Then the other senses begin seeking their own part, and all become divided.

From the viewpoint of reality, all the senses see one thing, but from the standpoint of outward form they are each different from the other. When one sense is moved to absorption, all the senses become absorbed in it. When a fly flies upward it moves its wings, its head and its whole body sep-

arately; but when it is immersed in honey, then all its parts are alike—none can move at all.

Absorption is such that whoever enters it is no longer there. They make no more efforts, they cease to act and move. They are immersed in the water. No action is their action; it is the action of the water. But if they flail about in the water with their hands and feet, they are not truly submerged. If they utter a cry, "I am drowning," this too is not absorption.

Take the famous utterance, "I am God." Some people think this is a great pretension, but "I am God" is in fact a great humility. Those who say, instead, "I am a servant of God" believe that two exist, themselves and God. But those who say, "I am God" have become nothing and have cast themselves to the winds. They say, "I am God" meaning, "I am not, God is all. There is no existence but God. I have lost all separation. I am nothing." In this the humility is greater.

This is what ordinary people don't understand. When they render service in honor of God's glory, their servanthood is still present. Even though it is for the sake of God, they still see themselves and

their own actions as well as God—they are not drowned in the water. That person is drowned when no movement, nor any action belongs to them, all their movements spring from the movement of the water.

A lion was chasing a deer, and the deer was fleeing. There were two beings evident: the lion and the deer. But when the lion caught up with the deer, and the deer was overpowered beneath the lion's clutch, and out of terror became unconscious and senseless, collapsing before the lion in that moment only the lion remained. The deer was effaced and no longer existed.

True absorption is when God creates in saints a fear. This is not the fear of men and women who are scared of lions, leopards and death. Rather, it is the fear of separation. This fear is a gift from God, just as security, pleasure and joy, eating and sleeping—all these are gifts from God.

God shows the saints, while they are fully conscious, forms that only they can see. The inner form of the lion, leopard, and fire become visible so they will know that reality is not of this world,

but of the world unseen, projected forth to them. In the same way, they are shown their own Self in magnificent form. Likewise, gardens and rivers, maids of Paradise and palaces, all types of food and drink, robes of honor, fleet steeds, cities, castles and every kind of marvel—they know these are not of this world. God shows and reveals these secrets before their eyes. Thus they come to know with certainty that fear of separation comes from God, as do security, comfort and all spiritual displays.

Now this fear of separation does not resemble the fears that most men and women know, because it is a result of revelation and experience. God clearly shows the saint that all things belong to God. The philosophers may know this, but they know it by intellectual proof, and proof is not permanent. The pleasure that comes from proof will not last. When the memory of the proof passes, its warmth and thrill pass away as well.

Thus, we know by proof that this house had a builder. We know by proof that this builder had eyes and was not blind, had power and was not

powerless, was living and not dead, and existed before the house was built. All these facts we know, but we know them by proof. Such proof is not permanent, and is soon forgotten. Lovers of God, however, being absorbed in God, have come to know the Builder and have seen with the eye of knowingness. They have eaten bread and salt together, and mingled the two. The Builder is never absent from their heart and their gaze. Men and women such as this pass away in God. With them, sin is not sin, and crime is not crime, since they are absorbed.

A certain king ordered his slaves, every one, to take in their hand a golden cup to greet a guest. His favorite slave was also commanded to take a cup. When the king showed his face, that special slave, on beholding the king, lost control of himself and was overwhelmed. The cup fell from his hand and was shattered. When the other slaves saw this they said, "Perhaps we should do this as well," and they cast down their cups deliberately.

"Why did you do that?" the king scolded them.

"He was your favorite, and that was what he did," they replied.

"Fools!" the king cried out. "He didn't do that. I did it."

To outward eyes, all of the slaves were sinful. But that one act was the very acme of obedience. Indeed, it transcended obedience and sin. Of them all, the true lover was that one slave. The others were but followers of the king. Thus, they followed that slave, since he had become the essence of the king, only outwardly wearing the form of slavery. He was filled with the beauty of the king.

God declares, "If it weren't for you, I would never have created the heavens." This is the same as "I am God." It means, "I created the heavens for I love you as Myself." This is "I am God" in another language and another tongue.

Though the words of the great saints appear in a hundred different forms, since God is one and the Way is one, how can their words be different? Though their teachings appear to contradict, their meaning is one. Separation exists in their outward form only; in inner purpose they all agree.

A prince orders a tent to be stitched. One person twists the rope, another strikes the pegs, another weaves the cloth, another stitches, another rends, another uses a needle. Though to outward appearance they are diverse and different, in inner purpose they are united and performing a single task.

So it is with the affairs of this world. When you look at it carefully, all are doing God's service; reprobate and righteous, sinner and disciple, devil and angel. For example, the king wants to test and try his slaves so the steadfast can be sorted from the weak-hearted, the loyal from the traitor, the faithful from the fake. If he did not have tempters and provokers, how could he test his slaves' loyalty? So, the tempters and provokers are serving the king, since it is by the king's will that they act. He sends a wind to show the difference between the stable and the unstable, to separate the gnat from the sparrow-hawk, so the gnat will vanish and the sparrow-hawk remain.

A certain king ordered a slavegirl to adorn herself and offer herself to his slaves, so their loyalty could be revealed. Though the girl's action

appears sinful outwardly, in reality she is doing the king's work.

The great saints have seen for themselves, not by proof and rote, but face to face and unveiled, that all people—good or evil—are obedient servants of God. Nothing exists that does not proclaim God's praise. Therefore, to the saints, this world itself is the resurrection, since the resurrection means all people serving God and doing no other work but God's work. These saints perceive this truth even here below, for even were the veil removed they would not increase in their certainty.

All may be servants, but some have been raised above others in their closeness to God. To those who are absorbed, all differences are lost. To those who have not yet arrived, many stages appear between one and another.

Let me cite a parallel. A gardener planted a tree, and the tree bore fruit. Surely, this tree that bore fruit is better than a hundred trees that are barren. It is possible those other trees may never bear at all, since there are many stages of growth where disease might attack. A pilgrim who reach-

es the Kaaba is better than the pilgrim who is still travelling in the desert. The one in the desert fears they may not pass the many landmarks and reach the Kaaba, while the former has already reached their destination. One certainty is better than a hundred doubts.

The Amir said: “Those who have not arrived still have hope.”

Rumi answered: What is the hopeful person compared to one who has arrived? There is a vast difference between fear and attainment. Why should I speak of such a difference when it is obvious to all? What I am speaking about is attainment, since there are many differences between the stations of attainment.

It is possible to indicate the various stages of fear and the stations of fear, but the stations of attainment have no indication. In the world of fear everyone decides what they will devote to honor God. One person gives through physical efforts, another donates their wealth, another sacrifices their life. One worships with fasting, another with prayer, another by ten prostrations, another by a hundred. These stages are very dif-

ferent and can easily be distinguished. In the same manner there are stages of travel from Konya to Caesarea that are distinct and well-known: One must pass Qaimaz, Uprukh, Sultan, and so forth. But the stages by sea from Antalya to Alexandria are without landmarks. The ship's captain knows the signs, but they are not shared with landsmen since landsmen cannot understand.

The Amir said: "But even speaking about it imparts some benefit. We may not know everything, yet still we learn a little, and can find out and guess the rest."

Rumi replied: Yes indeed, by God! Someone sits wakeful through the dark night, thinking of some way to find the day. Though they do not know how to get there, still, in waiting for daylight, the day approaches. Another person is travelling by caravan upon a dark night in a storming rain. They do not know where they have gone, which way they are passing, or what distance they have covered, but when day comes they see the results of that travelling and go on from there. Whoever labors for the glory of God, though both their eyes are sealed, their labor is not lost. Even

an atom's weight of good is not lost. Though all within is dark and veiled, and they do not see how far they have progressed, still in the end they will know. "This world is the seedplot of the world to come." Whatever they sow here, they will reap in the next world.

Jesus laughed a lot. John wept a lot. John said to Jesus, "You have become exceedingly carefree against all the subtle deceits, that you laugh so much." Jesus replied, "You have become exceedingly unmindful of the subtle, mysterious, wonderful graces and loving kindness of God, that you weep so much." One of God's saints was present at this incident. He asked God, "Which of these two has the higher station?" God answered, "He who thinks better of Me." In other words, "I come when you think of Me. Each person has an image and an idea of Me. Whatever picture he forms of Me, there I am. I fill that picture where God dwells. I care nothing for that point of view where God does not exist. Cleanse your thoughts, O human, for they are My abode and dwelling place."

Now test yourself as to weeping and laughter, fasting and prayer, solitude and company, and the rest. Which of these is more profitable to you? Whichever brings you straighter on the road and gains you the greatest advancement, choose that task. Take counsel from your heart, even though others may disagree. The truth is within you. Compare it with what others say. When they agree, then follow that course.

The physician comes to someone who is sick and questions the inward doctor; for within you there is a doctor, namely your natural temperament, instincts and inclinations. Therefore the external physician questions it: "This food that you ate, how was it? Was it light? Was it heavy? How was your sleep?" From what the inward doctor answers, the external physician makes their prescription. Therefore the root of the matter is the inward doctor; the patient's own response. When this inner doctor is feeble and its temperament is corrupt, the sick person sees things incorrectly and gives skewed indications. They say that sugar is bitter, vinegar is sweet.

Therefore they need the external physician to guide them until their own instinct is restored. After that they consult only their own inward doctor to find the counsel they need.

We have a similar doctor within our spiritual being. When this higher Self is feeble, our inward senses perceive falsely, and whatever we follow is contrary to the truth. So the saints are physicians who guide a person until their instinct is restored to its right balance, and their religion and their heart have gathered strength.

"Show me things as they truly are."

Humanity is a mighty volume. Within the people of this world all things are written, but veils and darkness do not allow men and women to read the knowledge within themselves. The veils and darknesses are those many preoccupations, worldly desires and thoughts of every kind. Yet, though they are wrapped in darkness and are hidden by so many veils, they can still read something and therefore learn. Consider when these darknesses and veils are removed, what they will learn then, and what varieties of knowledge they will discover within!

After all, all these trades and professions—tailoring, building, carpentry, goldsmithery, science, astronomy, medicine and the rest of the world's countless and innumerable callings—all these were discovered from within by some person, they were not revealed through stones and dirt. When they say that a raven taught people to bury the dead, even that was due to the reflection of a human being. Someone's own inner urge drove them to learn that. After all, the instincts of the bird are but a part of humanity, but a part does not command the whole.

After the Amir left, someone said: "When the Amir comes, the Master utters mighty words. The words never stop, because he is a master of words. Words flow from him without interruption."

Rumi said: If in winter time the trees do not put forth leaves and fruit, people should not think they are not working. They are continually at work. Winter is the season of gathering; summer is the season of spending. Everyone sees the spending, but they do not see the gathering in. In the same way, a person gives a party and spends

all sorts of money on it. Everyone sees this, but no one sees the gathering in and collecting little by little for the sake of that entertainment. No one sees any of that. Yet the ingathering is the root of the matter, for the spending comes out of that income.

Whoever we are in unison with, we communicate with them every moment, even in silence, in absence and presence alike. Even in battle with others, we are together. We may strike against others with our fists; still, we are speaking to them and are absorbed in one action with them. Therefore we are in unison. Don't become distracted by the fists—in those fists are spiritual gifts. You don't believe this? Then open those fists, and see the difference between the sweet joy of unison, and pearls of great price.

Many people speak fine, graceful sayings and lofty wisdom in verse and prose. The inclination of the Amir towards us is not on account of lofty wisdom, graceful sayings and sermonizing. Things of that kind are to be found everywhere, and are by no means in short supply. His loving me and his inclination towards me is not for those

things. He sees something else. He sees a light transcending what he finds from others.

It is related that a certain king summoned Majnun before him.

"What has happened to you. What has befallen you?" the king inquired. "You have disgraced yourself, forsaken your hearth and home, become wasted and utterly destroyed. What is Laila? What beauty is hers? I will show you many beautiful and lovely girls. Name your ransom and I will bestow them upon you."

When they were brought to court, Majnun and the lovely girls were duly introduced. Majnun kept his head cast down, staring in front of him.

"Well now, lift up your head and look!" the king commanded.

"I am afraid," Majnun replied. "My love for Laila is a drawn sword. If I raise my head, that blade will strike it off."

Majnun had become immersed in his love for Laila. Yet, the other girls also had eyes and lips and hair. What then had he found in Laila to come to such a state?

discourse 12

After the Amir arrived, Rumi said: I've been longing to call on you. But, knowing you were busy with the interests of the people, I spared you the trouble.

The Amir answered: "This duty has been pressing upon me. Now that the emergency has ended, from now on I will wait upon you."

Rumi said: There is no difference. It is all the same thing. You are so gracious that all things are the same to you. Since today it is you who are occupied with good deeds and charities, naturally I am able to call on you.

Just now some of us were discussing this question: If a saint, who carries God's secret jewel [God's grace], strikes someone, breaking their nose and jaw, who is the wronged party? Everyone says the one hurt has been wronged, but in reality the wronged person is the saint who is striking the blow. The one who was punched and had their head broken is the wrongdoer, and the

saint is surely the wronged party since they carry God's jewel. The saint is consumed in God, and therefore their actions are God's actions. We wouldn't call God a wrongdoer.

The Prophet raided, killed and spilled blood, but the unbelievers were the wrongdoers, and Mohammed was wronged. For example, a westerner lives in the West. An oriental comes to visit. The westerner is a stranger to the oriental, but who is the real stranger? Is not the oriental a stranger to the entire western world?

Still, this whole world is but a house, no more. Whether we go from this room to that room or from this corner to that corner, are we still not in the same house? But the saints who possess God's jewel have left this house. They have gone beyond. Mohammed said, "Islam began a stranger and will return a stranger as it began." Yet is not this world the real stranger? Therefore, when the Prophet was defeated he was the wronged party, and when he defeated his enemies, he was still the wronged party. For in both cases he was in the right, and the wronged party is the one who is in the right.

Mohammed's heart ached for his prisoners. To comfort the Prophet, God sent down a revelation saying: O Prophet, say to the prisoners in your hands, "If you turn to truth and the righteous way, God will deliver you out of bondage. He will restore everything you have lost, and much more, including treasures in the world to come."

The Amir asked: "When a servant of God performs a service, does the grace and good arise from that action, or is it the gift of God?"

Rumi answered: It is the gift of God and the grace of God. Yet God, out of Its exceeding love gives credit for both the action and the grace to the servant, declaring, "Both are yours."

The Amir said: "Since God has such love, then everyone who seeks in truth shall find."

Rumi said: But without a guide this does not come to pass. So, when the Israelites were obedient to Moses, ways were opened up to them even through the sea. But when they were disobedient, they remained in the wilderness for many years. The leaders of a given time are charged to secure the welfare of those who are bound to them and

are strictly obedient. For instance, if a group of soldiers follow the orders of their commander, he too cares for their welfare and is duty bound to work at securing it. But if they are not obedient, how can he be expected to look after their interests?

The mind is the commander of the human body. So long as the parts of the body surrender to it, all the body's affairs proceed perfectly, but when they disobey, the whole natural order breaks down. Haven't you seen when a man is drunk, his hands and feet and tongue refuse to obey him? Then on the following day, when he is sober again, he cries, "What have I done? Why did I do and say such horrible things?"

In the same way, a village works together in perfect order only when there is a leader that the villagers follow.

Just as the mind is commander in the midst of the body, so all the different beings who make up humankind, together with their many minds, knowledge, speculation and learning, are the body of humanity, and the saint is the mind in the

midst of them. Now when these people, who are the body, do not follow that mind, their affairs all fall into confusion and conflict.

They must surrender in such a fashion that no matter what the saint does, they accept it without the argument of their own mind. For often, with their own mind, they cannot understand the saint's actions. Therefore, they must submit to whatever the saint says. Similarly, when a child is apprenticed to a tailor they must obey whatever they are told to do. If they are given a patch to sew, they must sew it. If they are given a hem, they must sew that hem. If they wish to learn their trade, they must surrender their own desires completely and become submissive to the tailor's orders.

"The Night of Power is better
Than a thousand months."

God offers us divine guidance and care, which are superior to a hundred thousand strivings and struggles. One tug from God is better than the efforts of all our powers. That is to say, when divine care intervenes it does the work of a hundred thousand struggles and more. Struggling is

fine, and useful, but what is it compared to God's guidance and care?

The Amir asked: "Does God's care create struggles?"

Rumi answered: Why shouldn't it? When divine care arrives, struggling begins. Jesus—what a struggle he made! Yet John the Baptist recognized that gift while still in Mary's womb. Grace comes first. Then if, by accident, awareness enters in, this is the fruit of God's grace—the pure gift of the Lord. If this were not true, then how could Jesus' disciples have received such blessings?

Grace and submission are like a spark of fire that leaps. First we receive the gift. But if you add cotton and nurse that spark until it grows, then that is submission. In the beginning your spark is small and weak. But once you have nursed that weakling fire it spreads across the world and sets the universe aflame. The little spark becomes a great and powerful blaze.

Someone said to the Amir: "Our Master loves you very much."

Rumi replied: Neither my coming nor my speaking is an indication of my love. I say what-

ever comes into me. If God wills, It makes these few words profitable so they will grow within your heart, bringing great rewards. If God wills not, if even a hundred thousand words are spoken, they will not lodge in the heart but will pass by and be forgotten. If a spark of fire lands upon a burnt rag and God wills, that one spark will take and engulf the rag. If God wills not, a hundred sparks will fall on that tinder and leave no mark.

These words are God's army. By God's authority they open and seize fortresses. If God commands thousands of horsemen to go and show their faces at such and such a fortress but not to capture it, so it will be. If It commands a single horseman to seize that fortress, that same single horseman will open the fortress gates and capture it.

God sent a gnat against Nimrod and it destroyed him. "Equal in the eyes of the Gnostic are a penny and a dollar, a lion and a cat." If God bestows Its blessing, one penny does the work of a thousand dollars and more. If God withholds Its blessing from a thousand dollars, they cannot do the work of one penny. So too, if God commis-

sions the cat it destroys the lion, as the gnat destroyed Nimrod. In short, when we realize that all things are of God, all things become one and the same in our eyes.

I hope, too, that you will hear these words within your hearts, for that would be profitable. But if a thousand thieves come from outside, they cannot open the door without some fellow-thief inside who can unlock that door. Speak a thousand words from the outside, still, so long as there is none to answer from within, the door never opens. So too with a tree—as long as there is no moist thirst in its roots, even if you poured a thousand torrents of water over it, it would accomplish nothing. First there must be a thirst in its roots for the water to nourish it. Although the whole world is ablaze with the sun's light, unless there is that spark of light within the eye, no one can behold that light. The root of the matter is the receptiveness within Soul.

Soul is one thing and spirit is another. Don't you see during sleep how Soul travels abroad? Spirit remains in the body, keeping it alive, but Soul wanders and is transformed. When Mohammed said, "He who knows his own self

knows his Lord," he was speaking of knowing Soul.

If we say that he was speaking of this soul or that soul, that is something very different. On the other hand, if we explain it as meaning Soul, Itself, the listener may still think we mean one soul, since they do not yet know Soul, Itself. Mere words cannot convey this spiritual understanding. Words only reveal what the heart has an ear to hear.

Beyond this world is another world for us. This world and its delights cater to the animal within us. These pleasures all fill our animal nature, while our real self slowly dies. They say, "The human being is a rational animal," yet we consist of two things. Lusts and desires feed our animality in this material world. But as for our true essence, its food is knowledge, wisdom, and the sight of God. The animality within us flees away from God, while our spiritual self flees away from this world.

"One of you is an unbeliever,
And one of you a believer."
Two people are warring within you.
Who shall succeed?
The one that Fortune makes her friend.

This world is a world of winter. Isn't the name "solid" given to inanimate things? These stones and mountains, and the garments worn by this world, are all solidified. The inner essence of this world can be known by its effects: it is wind and bitter cold. It is like the winter season when all things are frozen. What manner of winter is it? A winter of the mind. When that divine zephyr comes along, these mountains will begin to melt, and the solidity of this world will dissolve—just like when the warmth of summer comes along, all the snow and ice turn to water. On the resurrection day, when that zephyr blows, all things will melt away.

God makes these words an army to surround you and protect you against the enemy, and to be the means of overwhelming the enemy. For there are enemies—enemies within and enemies without. Yet they are really nothing—what could they be?

Don't you see how a thousand godless people submit themselves to one leader who becomes their ruler, and that ruler is captive to his own thoughts? From this it is easy to see the effect of thoughts, since through one feeble and muddled

thought thousands of people and worlds are taken prisoner. Consider then, those whose thoughts are without limitations—what grandeur and splendor they possess, how easily they overwhelm the enemy, and what worlds they subdue!

When I see the limitless wisdom that exists, while armies unending stretch through waste upon waste, all prisoners of one person, and that person the prisoner of a contemptible little thought—where do they all stand compared to thoughts of powerful depths, infinite light, holy, and sublime?

Therefore thoughts have real effects. In this physical world all living things merely follow and act as instruments of thought. Without thought they are inanimate and solid. In the same way, those who understand only the outer form are also solid. They cannot penetrate the meaning. They are children, spiritually, and immature even if they are Sufi sheikhs, a hundred years old.

"We have returned from the lesser holy war
To fight the Greater Holy War."

We all see the battle with outward things and people, and we draw up our forces against these

formal adversaries. We must also draw up our forces against the armies of thoughts, so that desirable thoughts will defeat destructive thoughts and drive them out of the kingdom of our bodies. This then is indeed the greater struggle and the greater war.

Thoughts have their effect. They work beyond the influence of the body like the Laws of Nature without any instrument keep the heavens turning. Therefore philosophers say that thoughts don't require a body. After all, the body is but an accident. Why should anyone dwell on an accident?

Reality is like a musk-pod, and this material world and its delights are merely the scent of that musk. This scent is but transient, a mere accident. The individual who seeks the musk itself, not content with only the scent, that person is wise. But whoever is satisfied to possess the scent is a fool. They have chased after a thing their hand cannot grasp, for the scent is merely an attribute of the musk. So long as the musk is present in this world, its scent comes to the nostrils. However, when it leaves this world and crosses that invisible veil, all those who lived by its scent die. The

scent follows the musk, and goes wherever the musk goes.

Fortunate is the person who finds the musk from following its scent and then becomes one with the musk. They never die, but become an eternal part of the musk's essence, imbued with the qualities of the musk. They will carry its scent to the world, and the world is revived by them. Only the name of what that person used to be survives, as with a horse or any other animal that has turned to salt in the desert, only the name of horse remains to it. In effect and in truth it has now become a part of that great ocean of salt. What good or harm can a name do? It will not bring it out of its saltiness. And if you give some other name to this salt-mine, it will not change its taste.

So it behooves us to turn away from the pleasures and delights of this world, that are the rays and reflections of God. We must not become content with this much, even though this much exists through God's grace and the radiance of God's beauty. Still, it is not eternal. From God's viewpoint it is eternal, but from our viewpoint it is not. It is like the rays of the sun that shine into

our house, for though they are rays of the sun and are light, yet they belong to the sun. When the sun sinks, the light disappears too. Therefore it behooves us to become the Sun, so the fear of separation cannot cloud our life.

There is giving, and there is knowingness. Some have generosity and compassion but no true knowledge. Some have knowledge but no self-sacrifice. When both are present, that person is blessed and prosperous. Such a being is truly incomparable.

A stranger is going along a road, but does not know where the road begins or ends, or whether they have wandered the wrong way. They go on blindly, hoping that perhaps a cock will crow, or some other sign of habitation will appear. How can such a stranger be compared with those who know the road and travel at ease, not needing sign or waymark? They have their assigned task clearly before them. Therefore, knowing exceeds all else.

discourse 13

Mohammed said, “The night is long, do not shorten it with your sleep. The day is bright, do not darken it with your sins.”

The night is long for you to voice your inmost secrets and ask for your needs without the distraction of others, without the disturbance of friends and foes. You are granted peace and privacy as God draws down the veil before the eyes of others, so your acts may be honest, truthful and done wholly for God.

At night the hypocrite is exposed. The world may be hidden by the dark and shown clearly by the light of day, but at night the hypocrite stands revealed from the sincere.

“Since nobody is watching,” the hypocrite says, “for whose sake should I pretend?”

Somebody is watching, but the hypocrite’s eyes are closed and cannot see that One.

In times of distress everyone calls for help; in times of toothache, and earache, in doubt, fear and insecurity. In secret everyone calls out hoping

that One will hear and grant their requests. Privately, secretly, people perform good deeds to ward off weakness and restore their strength, trusting that Life will accept their gifts and efforts. When they are restored to health and peace of mind, then suddenly their faith leaves, and the phantom of anxiety soon returns.

"O God," they cry again, "we were in such a terrible state when, with all sincerity, we called upon you from our prison corner. For a hundred prayers you granted our requests. Now, freed of the prison, we are still as much in need. Bring us out of this world of darkness into that world of the prophets, the world of light. Why can freedom not come without prisons and pain? A thousand desires fill us, both good and deceitful, and the conflict of these phantoms brings a thousand tortures that leave us weary. Where is that sure faith that burns up all phantoms?"

God answers, "The seeker of pleasure in you is your enemy and My enemy.

'Do not take your enemy
and My enemy for a friend.'

When your pleasure-seeking self is imprisoned, filled with trouble and pain, then your freedom

arrives and gathers strength. A thousand times you have proved that freedom comes to you out of toothache, headache and fear. Why then are you chained to bodily comfort? Why are you always occupied with tending the flesh? Do not forget the end of that thread: unravel those bodily passions till you have attained your eternal passion, and find freedom from the prison of darkness."

discourse 14

Sheikh Ibrahim said: "Whenever Saif-al-Din Farrukh ordered someone to be given a beating, he would immediately occupy himself until the beating was over, so that no one could intercede."

Rumi said: Whatever you see in this world corresponds exactly with what is in the world beyond. All these realities are samples of the other Reality. Whatever exists in this world has come from there.

The bald man of Baalbek carried on his head trays and samples of various herbs—a pinch of pepper, a pinch of mastic, a pinch from every heap. The heaps were infinite, but there was no room on his tray for more. People are like the bald man of Baalbek, they are loaded with pinches and pieces out of the treasuries of God, some known and some hidden—a piece of hearing, a piece of speech, a piece of reason, a piece of generosity, a piece of knowledge. For this reason our work is always a reflection of God.

There are beings who are hawkers of God. Night and day they fill trays. By day you spend away your portion to make your living, by night these beings replenish your tray.

For instance, in the other world there are sights and visions of many kinds. A sample of those has been sent to you to see in this world. Sight is not limited to this world only, but the human body cannot bear more than this.

Thousands of people, generation after generation, have come and filled themselves from that Sea, returning again and again. That source is infinite. The longer we stay upon that Infinite Sea, the colder our heart grows for this world of samples.

This world is coined in that Mint and must return to that Mint again. All our parts have issued from that Mint, are samples of that Mint, and must return again—small and great, for all living creatures. Yet upon the tray of this world life becomes visible; without the tray it is not visible.

That infinite world is a subtle world and does not reveal itself openly—yet look how wonderfully it makes its appearance here! Don't you see

how the spring breeze becomes visible in the trees and grasses, the rose-beds and sweet herbs? Through the swaying of fields and flowers you witness the beauty of spring. But when you look upon the breeze itself, you see nothing. This isn't because the beauty of those rose-beds are outside the reality of the breeze, for the spring breeze contains images of swaying rose-beds and sweet herbs, but those images are subtle and invisible. Only through some medium are they revealed out of their subtlety.

Likewise in the human being these qualities are hidden and only become manifest through an inward or outward medium; one person through speech, another through work, another during times of war or peace. You cannot see these attributes within yourself—look and you will find nothing there—so you believe yourself empty of these infinite attributes. These attributes do not come forth and change you into something else from what you were. Rather, these qualities are hidden in you, like the water in the sea.

Water cannot leave the sea except through the sun's heat in the form of a cloud; it cannot become visible except in a wave. Your wave is a

commotion visible within you, but so long as the sea is still, you see nothing. Your body is on the shore of the sea, and Soul is a part of the ocean itself. Do you not see how many fishes, snakes, birds, and creatures of all kinds come forth and show themselves, and then return to the sea? Your attributes such as patience, friendship, loyalty and the rest, come forth from this sea.

These qualities are subtle lovers of God. You can only glimpse them through the medium of the tongue. But because of their subtlety, without speech they are naked and they retreat back out of sight into the arms of God.

discourse 15

Within people there is a longing and a desire such that, even if a hundred thousand worlds were theirs to own, still they would find no rest or comfort. They try every trade and craft, studying astronomy, medicine and every other subject, but they reach no completion, for they have not found their true desire. Poets call the Beloved "heart's ease," because there the heart finds ease. How can we find peace and rest in anything but the Beloved?

All these pleasures and pursuits are like a ladder. The rungs of a ladder are not a place to make one's home; they are for passing by. Fortunate are those who learn this. The long road becomes short for them, and they do not waste their lives upon the steps.

Someone asked: "The Mongols have seized property by force, and from time to time they give this property back to us. This is a strange situation. Is it lawful to accept this property? What is your ruling?"

Rumi answered: Whatever the Mongols seize and give up returns into the grasp and treasury of God. For example, when you fill a jug or a barrel from the river and carry it away, that becomes your property. So long as it is in the jug or barrel, nobody has the right to interfere. Whoever takes the jug without permission is guilty of theft. But once they pour the water back into the river, it passes out of ownership and is lawful for anyone to take once again. So our property is unlawful to them, while their property is lawful to us since by their giving it up they have returned it to the treasury of God.

Someone said: "When the Mongols first came to these parts they were naked and bare. They rode on bullocks and their weapons were made of wood. Now they are sleek and well-fed, they have splendid Arab horses and carry fine arms."

Rumi said: When they were desperate and weak and had no strength, God helped them and answered their prayer. Now, when they are so powerful and mighty, God is destroying them with the comforts of the feeblest, so they will realize it was through God's bounty and support that

they captured the world, and not by their own force and power.

They used to live in a wilderness, far from civilization, without means, poor, naked and needy. By chance, some of them came to trade in the territory of the Khvarizmshah. They began to buy and sell, purchasing muslin to clothe their bodies. The Khvarizmshah stopped them, ordering them to be put to death, and forcing payment from the rest of them. The Mongols went humbly before their king, saying, "They have killed us." Their king asked for ten days, and then entered a deep cave where he fasted and humbled himself. On the tenth day a proclamation came from God, "I have accepted your supplication. Come forth! Wherever you go, you shall be victorious." So it was. When they came forth, by God's command they won the victory and captured the world.

Someone said: "The Mongols also believe in the resurrection and say that there will be a judgement."

Rumi said: They lie, desiring to be accepted by Muslims. If they really believe in the resurrection, where is the evidence to prove it? The sins,

wrongs and evils they commit are like snow and ice piled together as high as a mountain. When thoughts of the resurrection come to us, like the sun it melts those snows of sinfulness as the sun in the heaven melts anything hard. How can the summer sun come and leave the snow and ice of winter intact? Seeing their snow and ice piled heap upon heap is proof that the sun has not shone upon them.

Although God has promised that all good and evil will be rewarded justly on the last day, yet a sample of this comes to pass every moment and in every instant. If happiness enters into someone's heart, that is his or her reward for making another happy. If they become sorrowful, it is because they have brought sorrow to another. These are gifts from the other world and tokens of that day of rewards, so that by these little things we may come to understand those great matters, just as a handful of corn is offered as a token of the whole heap.

The Prophet, for all his majesty and greatness, one night felt pain in his hand. It was revealed to him that this pain was the effect of a pain in the

hands of ‘Abbas. For he had taken ‘Abbas captive and had bound his hands together with all the prisoners. Although the tying of his hands was done at God’s order, still the Prophet had to suffer. These troubles and depressions that come to you are the effect of some injury and wrong you have committed. Even if you cannot remember in detail what you have done, still from the results you can know the deed. You may not remember whether it came from your own negligence or ignorance, or because others swayed you into wrongful action. But look at the results: how much did you fall from grace, or how much has your heart expanded? Certainly a fall from grace is the response of disobedience to God, and expansion of the heart is the reward of obedience. Why, the Prophet himself was rebuked because he turned a ring on his finger. He was told, “We did not create you for idleness and play.” From this decide for yourself whether your day is passed in obedience or disobedience.Moses was occupied with the affairs of his people. Although he was at God’s command and completely served God, yet one side of him was occupied with humanity for

the general good. Khadir was occupied with God completely; he hid himself from the sight of others. Mohammed was occupied at first wholly with God, then he was told, “Call the people. Counsel them and reform them.” Mohammed wept and lamented, saying, “Oh, my Lord, what sin have I committed? Why do you drive me from Your presence? I have no desire for this world.” God said to him, “Mohammed, do not despair, I will not abandon you. Even in the midst of others you shall be with Me. When you are occupied with people, not one hair of the head of this hour with Me, not one, will be taken from you. In whatever work you are engaged, you will be in very union with Me.”Someone asked: “The eternal decrees that God has predestined, do they ever change?”Rumi answered: How could God say, “Do evil to find good?” If someone sows wheat, can they gather barley? Or if they sow barley, will they gather wheat? That is impossible. All the saints and prophets have said that good is the reward of good, evil the reward of evil.”And whoever does an atoms weight of goodshall see it,And whoever does an atoms weight of evilshall

see it."Someone interjected: "But we see wicked people turn virtuous, and virtuous people turn wicked."Rumi answered: Well, those wicked men and women did some good, or thought good things, which brought them virtue. And those virtuous people did some evil act, or contemplated evil things, turning them wicked.Someone asked: "What is the meaning of the saying, 'Blessings upon the Prophet'?"Rumi answered: It means that our acts of adoration, service and worship do not belong to us, they come from God. Just like the season of spring brings the planting of seeds, and jaunts into the wilderness. They are the gift and bounty of spring.The people of this world see secondary causes and think they are the origin of everything. God's saints see the actualities as they are created and come into being. Secondary causes are only a veil to occupy the common people.God promised Zachariah, "I will give you a son." Zachariah cried, "I am an old man, and my wife is old. My instrument of lust has become feeble, and my wife can no longer conceive. Lord, how can a son be born?"The answer came, "Take heed Zachariah! You have lost the clue. I have

shown you a hundred thousand times that actualities have no causes. This very moment, I could produce out of you a hundred thousand sons without a wife and without pregnancy. Indeed, if I make the sign, a whole people will come forth, completely formed and grown. Did I not bring you into being in the world of spirits without a mother or father? Why do you forget these things?" The rank and substance of the prophets and saints and the many states of humanity can be set forth in a parable: Slaves are brought out of the heathen lands into the realm of Muslimdom, where they are sold. Some are brought at the age of five years, some are ten, and some are fifteen years old. Those who were brought as children, having been nurtured for many years amongst Muslims, completely forget their homeland. No trace of it remains in their memory. Those brought a little older remember a little. Those much older remember much more.In the world beyond, all are in the Presence of God. The food and sustenance there is the speech of God, without letters and without sounds. Those who are brought into this world as children, when they hear that Speech, remember nothing of their for-

mer state and see themselves as strangers to that Speech. They are veiled from God, being wholly sunk in forgetfulness. Some remember a little bit, and the longing and yearning for the other side is quickened in them. They seek out Truth. They are the believers. Some, when they hear that Speech, the Presence of God becomes manifest before their eyes, even as it was long ago. The veils are entirely removed, and they are joined in that union. These are the prophets and the saints.Now I say this to you earnestly, when the brides of heavenly truth show their faces within you and their secrets are revealed, beware, do not tell this to strangers. Do not describe what you have witnessed to others, and do not tell everyone these words of mine."Do not impart wisdom to those not worthy,lest you do wisdom wrong.And, do not withhold from the worthy,lest you do them wrong."If a fair and adorable lover surrenders to you privately in your house, saying, "Show me to no one, for I belong to you," it would never be proper for you to parade her in the bazaars and to call out, "Come and see this beauty!" That would never be agreeable to such an adorable one. She would be enraged against you.God has made

these words unlawful to some. Even so, dwellers in Hell cry out to the dwellers in Paradise, saying, "Where is your generosity and your humanity? Out of those gifts and bounties that God has given to you, out of charity and common kindness if you sprinkle just a little upon us, could that be so difficult? We are burning and melting in this fire. Out of those fruits, or out of those clear waters of Paradise, if you sprinkle a drop or two upon our souls, what would that be?" The dwellers in Paradise answer, "God has forbidden that to you. The seed of this bliss came from our earlier deeds. Since you did not sow and cultivate with faith, sincerity and good works, what should you gather here? Even if out of generosity we should share with you, since it is not your reward it would burn your throats and stick in your gullets." A crowd of hypocrites and strangers came into the presence of Mohammed. They began to talk about mysteries and praised the Prophet. Mohammed turned to his companions and said, "Cover up your vessels." He meant, "Conceal wisdom from strangers, and in their presence stop up your mouths and tongues, for they are mice and not worthy of this wisdom and grace." The

Amir who has just left our company—though he did not understand in detail what we were saying, yet he realizes in general that we were calling him to God. I take the wagging of his head, his smile of affection and his flush of passion as a sign of his understanding. If people from the country come into the city and hear the call to prayer, though they do not know in detail the meaning of the call, still they understand its purpose.16Rumi said: Whoever is loved is beautiful, but this doesn't mean that whoever is beautiful is loved."There are girls more beautiful than Laila," they used to tell Majnun. "Let us bring some to you.""I do not love Laila for her form," Majnun would reply. "Laila is like a cup in my hand. I drink wine from that cup. I am in love with that wine. You only have eyes for the goblet and do not know the wine. A golden goblet studded with precious stones, but containing only vinegar, what use is that to me? An old broken gourd with wine is better in my eyes than a hundred goblets of gold."A person must be moved with passion and yearning for them to tell the wine from the cup. This is the same as someone who is hungry, who hasn't eaten for ten days, and another who has eaten five times

a day. Both see a loaf of bread. The full one sees only more food, but the hungry person sees life, itself. To the hungry, this bread is a goblet, and the life it brings is wine. Such wine cannot be known except through hunger and yearning. Acquire this appetite so you will not only see the appearances of form, but will find the Beloved everywhere.

The forms of this world are cups. Science, art and knowledge are inscriptions upon the cup. When the cup is broken, those inscriptions disappear. Therefore, those who drink the wine see "the eternal reality, the deeds of holiness..."

Anyone asking a question must first come to the awareness that their knowledge is incomplete, and secondly that there is wisdom they know nothing about. Hence, the saying, "Asking is half of knowing."

But there must always be one in this world who knows. Everyone looks to someone, because ultimately we are looking for God. But there must always be one who can distinguish those who are hitting the mark from those who have been struck by the arrow of someone else's bow.

If you hear words coming through a wall, you know that wall isn't speaking and that voice belongs to someone else. The saints are like this. They have died before death, and have become like doors and walls. Not even a hair's tip of separate existence remains in them. In the hands of Reality, they are shields—but the shield doesn't move under its own power. Thus the saints say, "I am the Truth," meaning, "I am nothing at all, I move by the Hand of God." Look upon such shields as God. Do not take up violence against God. Striking blows against such shields are just like declaring war against God, Itself.

Every saint is God's proof. The rank and station of men and women is determined by how they treat the saint. If they are hostile to the saint, they are acting hostile against God. If they befriend the saint, they have made friendship with God.

"Whoever has seen them has seen Me.
Whoever finds them has found Me."

God's saints are familiar with the secrets of His refuge. They have become intimate with the Divine Mysteries that "none but the purified shall

touch." If they turn their backs on the tomb of a great saint, it is not out of disobedience or neglect. They have turned their faces toward that saint's essence, for these words spoken here are their essence. There is no harm in turning away from the body to face the soul.

It is a custom of mine that I want no heart to become distressed through me. During our meetings, sometimes a great multitude thrust themselves upon me and some of my friends try to fend them off. That disturbs me. I have said a hundred times, "Say nothing on my account. I am content with that." I care to such a degree that when such friends come to me, I dread the thought of boring them, so I speak poetry for their enjoyment. Otherwise, what do I care about poetry? By God, I care nothing for poetry. There is nothing worse in my eyes. To me, it is like the cook who plunges his hand into tripe, cleaning it out for the sake of a guest's appetite.

A merchant searches to see what products are needed in their city, and what the people want to buy. Then they buy and sell those goods and services, even if they are the lowest of things in their

eyes. I have studied many sciences and taken pains to offer fine, rare and precious things to the scholars and researchers, the clever ones and the deep thinkers who come to me. God has willed this. He gathered to me all those sciences, and assembled here all those pains, so I would become occupied with this work. What can I do? In my own country, and amongst my own people, there is nothing more shameful than poetry. If I had remained there, I would have lived in harmony with their temperament. I would have practiced what they love, such as giving lectures, composing books and preaching.

The Amir said: "The root of the matter is action."

Rumi said: Where are such people of action, so that I can teach them action? But now look how you cock your ears, seeking after words instead of action. If I were to stop speaking now, you would become upset. Become a seeker of action, so that I can show you action!

I am looking all over the world for students of action so that I can teach action. I am looking all over the world for anyone who knows action, but

I find no student of action—only of words, and so I occupy myself with words. What do you know of action? Action is only known through action. There is not one traveler upon this road—it is empty—so how will anyone see if we are on the true path of action?

After all, prayer and fasting are not action; these are forms of action. Action is an inward reality. From the time of Adam to the time of Mohammed, prayer and fasting have changed their form, but action is still the same.

Action is not what people think it is. People believe action is this outward show. But if a hypocrite performs only the form of action, such as prayer or fasting, it gains them nothing, since the sincere desire for true action was not present.

The secret principle of all things is speech and words. You do not yet know the true knowledge of speech and words, therefore you consider them unimportant. However, speech is fruit from the tree of action, for words are born of action. God created the world by a word.

You may have faith in your heart, but unless you share it through words, it is worth nothing.

When you say, “In this present age words are of no account,” you say this with words, do you not? If words are of no account, then why do we hear you say this with words?

Someone asked: “When we do a good deed, if we have hopes and expectations of a good reward from God, does that harm us?”

Rumi answered: By God, we must always have hope. Faith, itself, consists of fear and hope. Someone once asked me, “Hope itself is good, but what is this fear?” I said, “Show me a fear without hope, or a hope without fear. The two are inseparable.” For example, a farmer plants wheat. Naturally he hopes that wheat will grow. At the same time he is afraid some blight or drought may destroy it. So, there is no hope without fear, or fear without hope.

Now, when we hope expectantly for a reward, we will surely work with greater effort. Expectation becomes our wings, and the stronger our wings the farther the flight. If, on the other hand we lose hope, we become lazy and of no value to anyone. A sick person will take bitter medicine and give up ten sweet pleasures, but if

they have no hope for health, why would they endure this?

We are a mixture of animal and speech. If we do not speak outwardly, we still speak inwardly—we are constantly speaking. We are like a river in which clay is mixed; the pure water is our speech, while the clay is our animality. But the clay in us is an accident. Do you not see how those pieces of clay have crumbled and rotted away, while mankind's speech, poetry and sciences, both bad and good have remained?

The 'man or woman of heart' is a universe. When you have seen them, you have seen all. "All game is in the belly of the wild ass." All creatures in this world are contained in the man and woman of heart.

Good and evil, the dervishes may be,
Whoever is not so, no dervishes are they.

Once you have seen one who is the whole, surely you have seen the whole world. Whoever you see after is a mere repetition. That person's speech is contained in the words of the whole. Once you have heard their words, every word you hear thereafter is an echo.

Whoever beholds such a one, in any place,
Has seen all men and women, all time and space.

As the poet says:
You are the true transcription
Of the Archetype Divine.
A glass through which the Sun's
Own loveliness does shine.
Within, or without,
Wherever it may lie,
Accept every desire,
And declare, "'Tis I!"

discourse 17

The Amir of Rum said: "The unbelievers used to worship and bow down to idols. Now we are doing the selfsame thing. We go and bow down and wait upon the Mongols, and yet we consider ourselves Muslims. We have many other idols in our heart too, such as greed, passion, temper, envy, and we are obedient to all of them. So we act in the very same way as the unbelievers, both outwardly and inwardly, and we consider ourselves Muslims!"

Rumi answered: But here is something different; it enters your thoughts that this conduct is evil and utterly detestable. The eye of your heart has seen something incomparably greater that shows up this behavior as vile and hideous. Brackish water shows its brackishness to one who has tasted sweet water, and things are made clear by their opposites.

So God has implanted in Soul the light of faith to see these things as hideous. Confronted by

beauty, this appears ugly. Yet others are not affected this way, they are perfectly happy in their existing state, saying, "This is absolutely fine."

God will grant you your heart's desire—where your ambition is, that will be yours. "The bird flies with its wings, the believers fly with their aspiration."

There are three kinds of creatures. First there are angels, who are pure spiritual conscience. Worship, service and the remembrance of God are their nature and their food. They eat and live upon that essence. Like fish in the water, their mattress and pillow are the water. Angels are pure and free of lust, so what favor do they gain by not yielding to such desires? Since they are free of these things, they have no struggle against them. If they obey God's will it is not counted as obedience, for this is their nature, and they cannot be otherwise.

Second are the beasts who are pure sensuality, having no spiritual conscience to restrain them. They too are under no burden of obligation.

Lastly, there remains the poor human being, who is a compound of spiritual conscience and

sensuality. We are half angel, half beast. Half snake, half fish. The fish draws us toward water, the snake toward the earth. We are forever in battle. If our spiritual conscience overcomes our sensuality, we are higher than the angels. If our sensuality overcomes our spiritual conscience, we are lower than the beasts.

"The angel is saved through knowledge,
The animal—through ignorance.
Between the two struggle the people of this world."

Now, some have followed their spiritual conscience so faithfully that they have become entirely angels and pure Light. They are the prophets and the saints. They are freed of fear and hope. In some, lust has overcome their spiritual conscience so entirely that they have taken on the status of animals. Some are still struggling. These last are the people who feel within themselves an agony and anguish, a sorrow and a longing. They are not satisfied with their lives. These are the believers. The saints are waiting to bring them to their own station, to make them like themselves, just as the satans, too, are waiting to draw them to the lowest of the low.

"When God's help comes through victory,
And you see people
Submitting to His Will in throngs,
Then fill yourself with the presence of the Lord,
And seek His forgiveness;
For God turns to men and women again."

Now, commentators offer an outward interpretation to the above Sura, from the Koran, as follows: Mohammed had the dream, "I will make all the world Muslims and bring them to the path of God." When he saw his death approaching he cried, "Ah, didn't I come into this life to call the people to God?" God answered, "Do not grieve. In that very hour when you pass away, provinces and cities which you would conquer by armies and by the sword I will convert to obedience and to the faith, every one of them without armies. The sign of this will come at the end when you are dying, you will see people entering in throngs and becoming Muslims. When this sign comes, know that the time for your departure has arrived. Then give praise, and seek forgiveness."

However, there is an inward meaning to this Sura as well: People think they can drive away evil by great effort and striving. After struggling

and exhausting all their powers and means, they fall into despair. Then God says to them: "You thought you could achieve this goal through your own power, action and work. This is the law I have laid down: Whatever you possess, spend it in Our name. Then Our grace will supervene.

"You must journey upon this infinite road with the feeble hands and feet that you possess. We know well that with feet so feeble you can never accomplish this journey. Indeed, in a hundred thousand years you will not be able to accomplish a single stage of this journey. But even as you collapse and fall, with no strength left to struggle farther, then Our loving breath will carry you on. Even a child, so long as it is a suckling, is carried in the arms, but when it is grown it is set free to walk. Now in this hour when your powers have left you, when your own means fail, behold Our graces, Our gifts and Our love. You will not witness even an atom of such blessings after a hundred thousand strivings."

I do not love or bow down to the Amir on account of worldly considerations, for his rank, learning or achievements. Others love him for

those reasons, not seeing the Amir's face, but only his back. The Amir is like a mirror with precious pearls on its back, with gold inlaid. Those who love gold and pearls look at the back of the mirror, but those who love life always look upon the mirror, and love the mirror for itself. They do not grow weary of the fair beauty they see. But those with a hideous face full of blemishes see in the mirror only ugliness. They quickly turn the mirror and look for those precious stones. Yet what harm is done to the face of the mirror if its back is studded with a thousand kinds of engravings and precious stones?

"Things are made clear by their opposite."

It is impossible to know anything without its opposite, yet God has no opposite. "I was a hidden treasure," God says, "and I wanted to be known." So It created this world of darkness for Its Light to become visible. So, too, It manifested the prophets and the saints, saying, "Go forth with My Attributes into My creation." They are the theater for the Light of God, where friend may be disclosed from foe, and brother from stranger. The struggles of the saints reveals God's opposite,

even though It has none. Through persecution and opposition, the saints become known and admired.

"With their mouths, the unbelievers try to extinguish the
Light of God.
But God will perfect His Light through their adversity."

God chastises some people through wealth, gold and rulership, for Soul flees from such possessions. Shams saw a prince riding in Arabia, on his brow the illumination of the prophets and saints. Shams said, "Glory be to God who chastises His servants by means of affluence!"

discourse 18

Someone said: "Ibn Muqri recites the Koran correctly."

Rumi said: Yes, he recites the form of the Koran correctly, but he has no knowledge of its meaning. This is proven by the fact that when he is questioned for its meaning, he cannot answer. He recites blindly. He is like a man who holds an old, tattered sable in his hand; he is offered a newer, finer sable, but he refuses it. So we can see that he doesn't know what sable really is. Someone told him that this is sable, and he blindly accepted it.

It is like children playing with walnuts. Offer them the nut itself, or the oil of the walnut, and they will refuse it, saying, "The walnut is what we spin on the table. This doesn't spin." God's treasuries are many, and God's sciences are many. If he recites this Koran with knowledge, why does he reject the other eternal Koran?

I once explained to a Koran-teacher: The Koran says, "If the sea were ink for the Words of

my Lord, the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent." Now, with fifty drams of ink one can copy the whole of this Koran. Therefore, the Koran is only a symbol of God's knowledge and all the knowledge belonging to God.

An apothecary puts a pinch of medicine in a piece of paper. You wouldn't say, "The whole of the apothecary's shop is in this paper." That would be foolishness. After all, in the time of Moses and Jesus and the other prophets, the Koran existed. God's speech existed, but it was not in Arabic. I explained this to the Koran-teacher in this way, but I could see that it made no impression so I let him go.

It is related that during the time of the Prophet anyone who knew one Sura by heart, or half a Sura, was called a great person and pointed out, "They have a Sura by heart," since in that day they devoured the Koran. To devour a loaf of bread, or two loafs, is certainly a great accomplishment. But people who put bread in their mouths without chewing it and spit it out again can devour thousands of tons in that way.

Still this is a good thing. God has sealed the eyes of some people so they can cultivate this present world. If no one were blind to the other world, this world would be empty. It is this blindness that gives rise to culture and progress. Consider children, how they grow up recklessly and become tall, but when their judgement reaches maturity they stop growing. So the cause and reason for civilization is blindness, and the cause of devastation is sight.

What I am saying is motivated by one of two things: Either I speak out of envy, or I speak with compassion. God forbid that it should be envy! It is stupid to envy even those who are worthy of envy, then how can we envy one who is not worthy? No, I speak out of great compassion and mercy, for I wish to draw you into the true meaning.

A story is told of a man on the way to the pilgrimage who collapsed in the desert, overcome by thirst. Suddenly he saw in the distance a small and tattered tent. He struggled there, and seeing a young girl, he cried aloud, "I am a guest! I have attained my goal!"

Saying this, he sat down and asked for water. She brought him water that was hotter than fire and more brackish than salt, and from lip to throat it burned every part. The man, out of extreme compassion, addressed the woman.

"I am indebted to you for what relief you have given me," he said. "Compassion has welled up within me. Listen to what I say to you. Behold, Baghdad is nearby, and Kufa and Wasit and the rest. There you will find plenty of sweet, cool water, foods of various kinds, baths, luxuries, rich delights." And he described the pleasures of those cities.

A moment later the Bedouin came on the scene who was the woman's husband. He had caught a few brace of desert rats, which he told the woman to cook. They offered some to the guest, who being in such desperate straits ate them. After that, in the middle of the night, the guest slept outside the tent. The woman spoke to her husband.

"Did you hear all the stories our guest had to tell?" And she repeated to her husband the guest's entire account.

"Don't listen to these things," the Bedouin answered. "There are many envious people in the world. When they see others living a life of ease and abundance, they envy them and want to send them wandering away to deprive them of their fortune."

So it is with many people. When anyone out of pure compassion offers them a piece of advice, they see it as envy. But if there are roots in a person, in the end they will turn their face to the truth. If, since the day of the Primordial Covenant a drop has been sprinkled upon them, in the end that drop will deliver them out of all confusion and misery. Come then! How long will you be remote from us and estranged? How long locked up in confusion and sadness? And what should we say to people who have never heard stories like this before, even from their own teacher?

Since greatness never graced their forebears,

They cannot bear to hear the great ones praised.

Although facing the truth is not attractive at first, the longer one follows it the sweeter it becomes. This is the opposite of outward forms

that charm us at first, but the longer you sit with them thinking they are all there is, the colder you become. What is the form of the Koran compared with its meaning? Examine a man or woman: what is their form compared with their meaning? If the sense of that person departs, we wouldn't let them loose in our house for one moment.

Our Master, Shams, once told this story: A great caravan was on its way to a distant city. Along the way they found a certain place with no sign of habitation or water. Suddenly they came upon a well with no bucket. So they took a kettle and some rope and lowered this kettle into the well. They drew up the rope, but the kettle broke away. They sent down another, but it broke away too. After that they tied people from the caravan with a rope and lowered them down into the well, but they disappeared as well.

Now there was a man of great heart present. He said, "I will go down." They lowered him down. He was nearly to the bottom of the well when a terrible black creature suddenly appeared.

"I will never escape," the man thought. "But at least let me keep my wits about me and not lose my senses, so that I can see what is going to happen."

"Don't make a long story of it," the black creature said. "You're my prisoner. You won't escape unless you give me the right answer. Nothing else will save you."

"Ask on," said the man.

"Where is the best place?" the creature asked.

"I am a prisoner and helpless," the man reflected. "If I say Baghdad or some other place, I might insult his own hometown." Then he spoke aloud, "The best place to live is wherever we feel at home. If that is in the bowels of the earth, then that's the best place. If it's in a mouse hole, then that's the best place."

"Well said, well said!" cried the creature. "You've escaped. You're one in a million. Now I've let you go, and set free the others on account of your blessing. From this time forward I'll shed no more blood. I bestow this gift on all the people of the world out of love for you."

Then he gave the people of the caravan water to satisfy their needs.

The purpose of this story is contained in its inner meaning. We can tell the same meaning in another form, but the lovers of traditional forms will accept this version. It is difficult to speak with

them. If we speak these very same words in another parable they will not listen.

discourse 19

Rumi said: Someone said to Taj al-Din Quba'i, "These doctors of divinity live amongst us and deprive the people of their religious beliefs." Taj al-Din Quba'i answered, "They do not live amongst us and take away our beliefs. God forbid they could ever be one of us. If you put a golden collar on a dog, do you call it a hunting dog because of that collar? The quality of being a hunting dog is something specific in the animal, whether it wears a collar of gold or wool."

No one becomes a scholar by virtue of robe and turban. Scholarship is a virtue in its very essence, and whether that virtue is clothed in tunic or overcoat, it makes no difference.

Thus, in Mohammed's time, the hypocrites used to put on prayer-robes to lure Muslims away from the Faith. How could they lead astray Muslims until they dressed up as Muslims, themselves? If a Christian or a Jew criticized Islam, who would listen to them?

"Woe to those that pray
Yet do not listen to their own prayers,
Or to those who make big displays
But for others have no care."

But these are merely words. You have caught that Light but still have not found humanity. Seek humanity: that is your true purpose. The rest is mere long-windedness. When words are elaborately decorated, their purpose is forgotten.

A certain greengrocer was in love with a woman, and he sent messages by the lady's maid.

"I am like this, I am like that. I am in love, I am on fire. I find no peace. I am cruelly treated. I was like this yesterday. Last night such and such happened to me." And he recited long, long stories.

The maid came into the lady's presence and addressed her as follows:

"The greengrocer sends you greetings and says, 'Come, so that I may do this and that to you.'"

"So coldly?" the lady asked.

"He spoke at great length," answered the maid. "But that was his purpose."

The purpose is the root of the matter; the rest is merely a headache.

discourse 20

Rumi said: Night and day you are at war, attempting to reform the character of the opposite sex, to cleanse their impurity and to correct their faults. It is better to cleanse yourself through them than trying to cleanse them through yourself. Reform yourself by means of them. Go to them and accept whatever they may say, even if from your viewpoint their words sound absurd or unfair.

It was on account of this truth that Mohammed said, "There is no monkhood in Islam." The way of monks is solitude, dwelling in mountains, men not living with women, and giving up the world. God showed the Prophet a straight and hidden way. What is that way? Marriage, so that we can endure the trials of living with the opposite sex, to listen to their demands, for them to ride roughshod over us, and so in this way to refine our own character.

By enduring and putting up with the tyranny of your spouse it is as though you rub off your own impurity on them. Your character becomes good through forbearance; their character becomes bad through domineering and aggression. Once you have realized this, make yourself clean. Know that they are like a garment; in them you can cleanse your own impurities and become clean yourself.

Rid yourself of pride, envy and jealousy, until you experience pleasure in struggling and enduring. Through their demands discover spiritual joy. After that, you will endure such struggles, and you will not run from oppression, since you will see the advantages they bring to you.

It is related that Mohammed returned with his Companions from a raid, one night. He told them to beat the drum saying, "Tonight we will sleep at the gate of the city, and enter tomorrow." They asked, "Messenger of God, why don't we return to our homes immediately?" He said, "You might see your wives in bed with strange men. You would be hurt, and a commotion would arise." One of the Companions did not hear; he entered and found his wife with a stranger.

The way of the Prophet is this: It is necessary to endure pain to help rid ourselves of selfishness, jealousy and pride. To experience the pain of our spouses' extravagant desires, the pain of unfair burdens, and a hundred thousand other pains beyond all bounds, so the spiritual path can become clear. The way of Jesus was wrestling with solitude and not gratifying lust. The way of Mohammed is to endure the oppression and agonies inflicted by men and women upon each other. If you cannot go by the Mohammedan way, at least go by the way of Jesus, so you will not remain completely outside the spiritual path.

If you have the serenity to endure a hundred buffets, seeing the fruits and harvest that come through them, or believing in your hidden heart, "Though in this hour I see no harvest of these sufferings, in the end I will reach the treasures," you will reach the treasuries, yes, and more than you ever desired and hoped.

If these words have no effect upon you now, after a while when you become maturer they will leave a great impression. This is the difference between talking with your spouse and a friend. When you speak to your mate, they remain the

same and will not change their ways due to anything you say. You words have no affect on them, indeed they become more determined.

For instance, take a loaf of bread, put it under your arm, and deny it to others, saying, "I will not give this to anyone. Give it? Why, I won't even show it." Even if that loaf had been cast away and the dogs would not eat it because bread is so plentiful and cheap—yet the moment you begin to refuse it, everybody is after it and sets their hearts on it, pleading and protesting, "We want to see that bread which you refuse and keep hidden." Especially if you keep it hidden for a year, insisting emphatically that you will neither give it away nor show it, their eagerness for the loaf passes all bounds, since, "People are passionate for whatever they are denied."

The more you tell your spouse, "Keep yourself hidden," the greater their itch to flirt and show themselves. And through their being hidden, the opposite sex becomes more eager for them. So there you sit in the middle, augmenting eagerness on both sides, and you think of yourself as a reformer! Why, that is the very essence of corrup-

tion. If they have in them the natural quality not to do evil, whether you prevent them or not, they will proceed according to their good temperament and pure constitution. So rest assured, and don't worry. If they are the opposite, they will still go their own way; trying to stop them in reality does nothing but increase their eagerness.

Someone said: "We heard some men saying, 'We saw Shams-i-Tabriz, we really saw him.'"

Rumi said: Fools, where did they see him? Would you listen to someone who cannot see a camel on the roof of their own house, if they come along and say, "I found a needle in the field and threaded it." That is a fine story, like the person who said, "Two things make me laugh—a black person painting their nails black, and a blind person putting their head out of the window." They are exactly like that. Blind inwardly, they put their heads out of the window of the physical body. What can they see? What does their approval or disapproval amount to?

First it is necessary to acquire inner sight. Then one can see. But even with sight, how can one see what is hidden? In this world there are saints who

have achieved union, and other saints beyond those, called the Veiled Ones of God. The former saints are ever pleading humbly, "Oh Lord God, show us one of Thy Veiled Ones." Now as for those tavern-haunting braggarts, of course they cannot reach or see what their own boasting hides. How can one see the Veiled Ones of God, or know them without their will?

It is not an easy matter. Even the spiritual angels, who are not tempted by either wealth nor rank, who have no veil to separate them, whose food is the pure Light and Beauty of God, whose eyes—keen and farsighted—see only pure Love, these spiritual angels swing between favor and disfavor toward the people of this world. This is so that, during our moments of disgrace we might tremble and ask, "What have I become? What do I know?" And if some light should shine upon us and we should be graced by a certain joy, we might give thanks a thousandfold to God, saying, "How am I worthy of this?"

Submitting yourself in this way, you can experience great joy even from a word or a glimpse of Shams. For the sail on the ship of our being is our

ideal. When there is a sail, the wind can carry us to mighty places. When there is no sail, all words are merely wind.

The lover-beloved relationship is very pleasant; everything between the two is sheer informality. All formalities are for the sake of others. I would give a great exposition of these words, but the hour is late, and one must labor very hard and dig out rivers to reach the pool of the heart. In this matter proofs cannot work. Here one must be a seeker of love, not an observer.

It might seem that I exaggerate the relationship of the lover, but this is not true. In fact, I see that disciples should give up their own purpose for the sake of their master's form.

Thou whose form is fairer far
Than a thousand purposes are.

Every disciple who comes to the master must first abandon his or her own purpose, being in need of the master.

Baha al-Din asked the question: "Surely they shouldn't abandon their own purpose for the sake of the master's form, but for the sake of the master's purpose?"

Rumi answered: That isn't possible. If this were so, then both would be masters. Now you must struggle to find the inward light, to escape and be secure from this fire of confusions. When you acquire such an inward light, all the desires of this world such as rank, honor, and title pass across your inward heart like a lightning-flash. With worldlings, the rewards of the unseen world such as the presence of God and yearning for the world of the saints' shine upon their hearts for a moment and then pass like a lightning-flash. Therefore it is rank, honor and title they really seek. However, the people of God become wholly God's, their faces are turned to God. They are preoccupied with and absorbed in God. Worldly passions, like the lust of an impotent man, show briefly but do not take root and quickly pass away.

discourse 21

Rumi said: Sharif Paysukhta has written:

God dispenses Its grace,
Indifferent to time and space,
Itself, the Spirit of the Whole
Is independent of our soul.
No matter what our ranging thought
Within its compass may be brought,
We find adoration for the Lord,
For It who need not be adored.

These words are shameful; they neither honor God, nor do they honor mankind. Oh poet, what joy does it give you that God should be supremely independent of you? This is not the language of friends; this is the language of enemies. The enemy indeed says, "I am indifferent to you and do not care."

Now consider the loyal and ardent lover of God who, when in a state of ecstatic joy, addresses that Beloved, "You are independent of me!" They would be like a stoker of the fires at the baths, saying, "The Sultan is indifferent and independent of me, a mere stoker. Indeed, the Sultan

is indifferent to all stokers." What joy would such a miserable stoker feel with the thought that the king was indifferent to them? No, the right words for the stoker to speak would be: "I was on the roof of the baths. The Sultan passed by. I hailed him. He looked well at me and then passed me by, still looking at me." Such words might well give joy to that stoker. As for saying, "The king is indifferent to stokers," what sort of praise for the king is that, and what joy can it give the stoker?

No matter what our ranging thought
Within its compass may be brought,

Oh poet, what indeed will pass within the compass of your thought when you find that it is people who are independent of you, they are bored of your thoughts and run away? God's independence is certain, oh poet, but if you have a spiritual state worth anything at all, He will not be independent of you. God's closeness to you establishes the degree of your greatness.

Sheikh Mahalla used to say, "First see, then converse. Everyone sees the Sultan, but it is his favorite who enjoys his conversation." This too is

backwards. Moses enjoyed the speech of God. With God's word he was filled. It was only afterwards he sought to see. Moses' station was the station of speech; the station of Mohammed was the station of seeing. How then can the Sheikh's statement be correct?

Someone said to Shams-i-Tabriz, "I have established the existence of God by a categorical proof." The following morning our Master, Shams, said, "Last night the angels came down and blessed that man, saying, 'Praise be to God, he has established the existence of our God! God give him long life! He has done no harm to the honor of men and women!'"

Oh poet, God exists. It needs no proof. If you do anything at all, establish yourself in some rank and station before Him. Otherwise, how can you share in His grace?

Nothing exists that does not proclaim His praise.

Lawyers are clever, a hundred per cent competent in their own specialty. But between them and the spiritual world, a wall has been built to pre-

serve their empire of logic and proofs. If that wall did not exist as a veil for them, no one would consult them and their work would disappear.

This is like what Shams said, “The other world is like a sea, and this world is foam from that sea. God desired to keep this foam in order. Therefore, He set certain people with their backs to the sea so this foam would not fall into ruin.”

A tent was pitched for a king, and he kept certain people busy constructing this tent. One says, “If I don’t make the tent-ropes how will the tent stand up?” Another says, “If I don’t make the pegs, where will they tie the ropes?” Still, everybody knows these people are servants of the king. If the weavers gave up weaving and sought to be viziers, the whole world would be naked and bare. So, they were given a joy for their craft. They are content with weaving. Therefore people were created to keep the world of foam in order, and this world was created for the Saint.

God bestows contentment and happiness on everyone in the work that is theirs, so that even if their life should last a hundred thousand years they would still find love for their work. Every

day the love for their craft becomes greater, and subtle skills are born to them, which bring them infinite joy and pleasure.

Nothing exists that does not proclaim His praise.

There is one praise for the rope-maker, another for the carpenter who makes the tent-poles, another for the maker of the tent-pins, another for the weaver who weaves the cloth for the tent, another for the saints for whom the tent is made.

Now these seekers who come to us, wanting some time with us, if we say nothing they are disgusted and hurt. Yet if we say something it must be beneficial to their level of attainment. So we approach cautiously, and they leave, criticizing us, saying, "They are holding back what they know. They are hiding from us and running away."

How should the fire run away from the cook pot? It cannot. The truth is that when we see that the vessel is weak, we draw back some distance to protect it. So, it is really the pot that runs away. Our running away is their running away. We are a mirror. If they move to run away, it appears to them in us. We run away for their sake. In a mir-

ror people see themselves. If they see us as weary, that weariness is theirs and a reflection of their weakness. There is no room here for weariness; what use do we have for weariness?

In the baths, once, I showed great submission to Sheikh Salah al-Din, and Sheikh Salah al-Din showed great submission to me. Confronted by his submission, I protested. I thought to myself, "You are carrying submission too far. Submission is better by degrees: First you kiss the hand, then the foot. Little by little you come to a point where it does not stand out as a display, and in return they are moved by your sincerity. They are not chased away, or forced into matching courtesy with courtesy, when you gradually show your affection."

We must act this same way with friends and enemies, doing things gradually. For instance, with an enemy, first we offer them our advice, little by little. If they do not listen, we show some force. If they do not heed that, then we drive them away.

The work of the world proceeds in this way. Don't you see the peace and friendliness of

spring? In the beginning it shows us warmth little by little, then it displays its graces more and more. Look at the trees, how little by little they advance. First a smile, then they show their trappings of leaves and fruit, like dervishes and Sufis offering their hearts, giving away all that they possess.

Men and women run away from every goal, whether worldly or spiritual, because they overestimate the initial task. The proper way is a bit at a time. It is the same if someone eats too much; they should diminish it daily by a small bit, gradually. In that way, before a year or two have passed, they will have cut down what they eat by half, reducing it in such a way that their body does not notice. So it is with worship, withdrawing into solitude, attending to the service of God, and prayer. When a person enters upon the Way of God, for a while their prayers will be short. But after that, if they pray with their whole heart, their prayers will go on and on without end.

discourse 22

Rumi said to Ibn Chavish: The root of the matter is that you should guard against this backbiting when talking about Sheikh Salah al-Din. Perhaps this will remove these dark shadows and clouds that surround you.

How can you defend yourself? People have left their own country, their fathers and mothers, their households, kinsfolk and families, and have journeyed from Hind to Sind until their boots were cut to shreds, in search of someone having the fragrance of the other world. How many men and women have died of sorrow, never succeeding nor encountering such a person! As for you, you know such a man here in your own house, and you turn your back on him. This is a tragedy of recklessness.

You used to tell me that Sheikh Salah al-Din was the sheikh of sheikhs, a great and mighty man. "From the day I entered his service," you said to me, "I never heard him once mention your

name except as Rumi, Our Master, Our Lord, Our Creator. I never heard him change this humble expression for a single day." It must be your ambitions that have blinded you now. Today you say that Salah al-Din is nothing.

What wrong has Sheikh Salah al-Din ever done you? Only, when seeing you fall into a pit of self-destruction, he said to you, "Beware of the pit." He said this out of compassion for you, above all others, but you reject that compassion. Now, you find yourself in the midst of his wrath, and having plunged into this wrath, how will you escape? That is why he says, "Do not dwell in my house of wrath and anger. Move into my house of grace and compassion. Do something in praise of me, and enter my house of love." He says this because then your heart will shed this darkness and fill with light.

He says this to you for your own sake, for your own good, but you charge his compassion to some ulterior motive. What ulterior motive should a man like that have towards you? Isn't it true that whenever you are filled to satisfaction with drink or music, at the same time you are

pleased with every enemy, forgiving them all? In that hour, unbeliever and believer become the same in your eyes. Now Sheikh Salah al-Din is the very ocean of this spiritual joy. All the seas of satisfaction are within him. How could he hate anyone, or have plans against them? And especially, what designs would he have against such as locusts and frogs? How can he, who possesses such empire and grandeur, be compared with such miserable creatures?

Is it not said that the Water of Life must be found in darkness? This darkness surrounds the saints, in whose being we find that Eternal Spring. The Water of Life is hidden in their darkness. If you turn from darkness and run away from it, how can the Water of Life ever reach you?

Don't you think if you wanted to learn sodomy from sodomites, or harlotry from harlots, you could never learn anything without putting up with a thousand disagreeable things, beatings and the thwarting of your desires? This is the only way you could attain your goal. Then how do you expect to attain the eternal and everlasting source of life, which is the station of the prophets and

saints, without anything disagreeable or without any sacrifice? How could this ever happen?

What the Sheikh prescribes for you is the same as what Sheikhs of old prescribed; that you give up your wealth and position. Indeed, they used to tell a disciple, “Leave your wife, that we may take her,” and the disciples put up with that. As for you, when he counsels you a simple thing, how is it that you run away?

Do you not see how people are overcome by blindness and ignorance when they fall in love, how they will fawn and grovel and sacrifice all their wealth, seeking somehow to win the one they want with every effort. Night and day they think of nothing else, never wearying of their pursuit, yet wearying of everything else. Then, is the love for the Sheikh and the love for God less than this?

Yet, at the smallest word of advice and discipline you object and desert the Sheikh. Hence it is known that you are no lover or seeker. Were you a true lover and seeker, you would put up with many times what we have described. To your heart, dung would become honey and sugar.

discourse 23

Rumi said: I would like to go to Tuqat, for that region is warm. Although Antalya is warm, only a few people there understand our language. However, I was speaking there one day when a party of unbelievers was present. In the middle of my talk they began to weep with emotion and show signs of ecstasy.

Someone asked: “What can they understand? What do they know? Only one Muslim in a thousand understands this kind of talk. What could an unbeliever understand that would cause them to weep?”

Rumi answered: It isn’t necessary for them to understand the inner meaning of what we say. The vessel of this meaning is the words themselves, and this they do recognize. After all, everyone knows of the Oneness of God, Creator and Provider, the source of all life, where all things return. When anyone hears these words, which are a description and expression of God, a uni-

versal emotion and inner feeling stirs them, since out of these words comes a scent of their Beloved and their Quest.

The ways may vary, but the goal is one. Don't you see that there are many roads to the Kaaba? For some the road is from Rum, for some from Syria, others come from Persia or China or by sea from India and Yemen. So if you consider the roads, they are beyond counting, with infinite differences. But when you consider the goal they are all in accord with one desire.

The hearts of all are upon the Kaaba. The hearts are one in their longing and love for the Kaaba, and in that there is no room for separation. That love is neither belief nor non-belief, for it has nothing to do with the various roads. Once we arrive, this argument and war and those differences in the roads—this woman saying to that man, "You are false, you are an infidel," and that man saying the same about her—once we arrive at the Kaaba, we realize that such fighting is over the roads only, and that the goal of all is the same.

For instance, a bowl's spirit is in love with its maker, and is a slave to those hands that fashion

it. Yet some see this bowl and say it should be placed just as it is on the table. Some say the inside of it should be washed first, some say the outside of it must be cleaned. Some say all of it, some say it must never be washed at all. The diversity of opinion comes from the bowl's many uses, but as to the fact that the bowl certainly had a creator who fashioned it, and that it did not come into existence of itself, on this all agree.

Now, men and women in their inmost hearts love God, seek Him, pray to Him and in all things put their hope in Him, recognizing none but God as the central reality ordering their affairs. This is neither belief nor non-belief. Within the heart it has no name. But when the water of innate truth flows out of the heart towards the sluice of the tongue and takes form, it acquires shape and expression. There it is given the name of infidelity or faith, good or evil. It is the same with plants growing out of the earth. At first they have no form at all. When they make their appearance in this world their shoots all look fine, delicate and white. But as they grow further they take on dif-

ferent shapes and colors. Then we can call them by name.

When believers and infidels sit together and say nothing, they are one and the same. There is no conflict of belief; the heart is a free world. Beliefs are subtle things and cannot be judged. People can judge by outward expression only, God is the fashioner of our secret hearts. When God uncovers your own beliefs to you, not a hundred thousand efforts can hide them again. As for the saying that God needs no instrument, do you not see how He reveals those ideas and beliefs in you without any instruments, without any pen, without any pigment?

Those beliefs are like birds of the air, and wild deer. Until you catch them, it is not allowable by law to sell them. It is not in your power to sell a bird on the wing, for how can you deliver it? Since it is not in your power, it is not yours to sell.

Beliefs then, so long as they are in the heart, are without name and token—they cannot be judged. Would any judge say, "In your heart you made this oath, you had this idea," or "Come, swear

that in your heart you did not think this?" No judge would say this, because no one can judge the heart. Beliefs are birds of the air. Yet once they have been expressed, then immediately they can be judged as true or false, good or evil.

There is a world of bodies, a world of ideas, a world of fantasies, a world of possibilities. God is beyond all worlds, neither within them, nor without. Consider then how God fashions our beliefs, forming them without material means, without pen or instrument. As for this fancy or that idea, if you were to tear open the breast and search particle by particle you would never find that thought. Not in the blood, not in the vein, not above, not below. Being immaterial and beyond time and space, you would not find it outside the breast, either.

Since God's mark is so subtle as to be without trace, consider how subtle and without trace is God, Itself, the fashioner of all! Just as the physical body is gross in relation to the inner meaning of a person, so this subtle and invisible meaning is a gross body and form next to God's subtlety.

All Muslims say, “We will enter the Holy Mosque.” Some Muslims say, “If God wills, we will enter.” Those who use the expression “if God wills” are the true lovers of God. For the lover does not think that they’re in charge of things and a free agent. They recognize that the Beloved is in charge. Hence they say, “If this Beloved wills, I will enter.”

Now the literalists take the Holy Mosque to be the Kaaba in Mecca. However, lovers and the elect of God take the Holy Mosque to mean union with God. So they say, “If God wills, we will attain Him and be honored by the sight of Him.” For God to say, “If God wills,” is very rare. It is the tale of a stranger, and only a stranger can understand such a tale. Yet God has certain servants who are so well loved that He seeks them out, showering them with blessings, and carrying out all the actions of a lover. Just as the lover would say, “If God wills, I will enter,” so God says on behalf of that saint, “If God wills.”

If I were to try explaining this subtlety, even the saints who have attained God would lose the

thread of the discourse. How then is it possible to speak of such mysteries and mystic states to mortal men and women? "The pen wrote this far, and then it broke!" If someone can't see the camel on top of their own house, how can they see the thread of one hair in the mouth of that camel?

To resume: Those lovers who say, "If God wills," such people are absorbed in God. There is no room for anything else. Otherness does not even exist. For until a person has surrendered their image of a separate existence, the Holy Mosque cannot be found. "There is none dwelling in the house but God."

"The vision He entrusted to His Messenger..."

This vision is the dream of lovers and true people of God, but the true meaning is only revealed in the other world. When you see in a dream that you are riding on a horse, this means you will attain your goal; yet what connection does the horse have with a goal? If you dream that you have been given coins of good currency, the meaning is that you will hear true and good words from a wise person; but how does a coin resemble a word? If you dream that you have been hanged

before a crowd, you will become the chief of a people; but how do gallows resemble leadership? In the same way, the affairs of this world are a dream. "This world is the dream of a sleeper," and its meaning is seen quite differently in the other world. There it is truly judged by the Divine Interpreter, for to Him all things are revealed.

Like a gardener who enters an orchard and looks at the trees, without even looking at the fruit on the branches, they can judge this tree to be a date, that one a fig, that a pomegranate, a pear, or an apple. The true people of God know the science of trees, therefore they need not wait for the resurrection to see the interpretation of life. Such a person sees beforehand what will be, just as the gardener knows what fruit each branch will surely yield.

All things in this world—wealth, a mate, and clothing—are desired for something other than themselves. Don't you see that even with a hundred thousand gold coins, if you were hungry, and you could find no food, you could not feed yourself on gold? A mate is for the sake of children, companionship and to satisfy passion. Clothes are

to ward off the cold. In this way, all things are desired for some other thing, each desire leading to the next, all ending in the desire for God. He is desired for His own sake, not for anything else. Being beyond all, greater than all, nobler and subtler than all, can God be desired for something less? "So, He is the goal." Within God is the completion of all things, beyond Him there is no transcending.

The human mind churns with doubts and difficulties. The mind can never be rid of these except when it is truly in love—then all its doubts and difficulties vanish. "Your love renders you blind and deaf."

For example, when Iblis would not bow down before Adam and opposed God's command, Iblis said, "My essence is spirit, his essence is clay. Why should the higher bow down before the lower?" So God banished Iblis for opposing and contending with Divine Law. Then Iblis argued, "Alas, O Lord! You made all things. This was Your temptation, and now You are cursing me and banishing me."

Yet when Adam sinned, God expelled him from Paradise, but Adam said nothing back. Then God said to Adam, "O Adam, I have held you responsible and punished you for the sin you committed, why did you not argue with Me? After all, you had a perfect case. You could have said, 'All things proceed from You and are made by You. Whatever You desire in the world comes to pass, and whatever You desire not will never come to pass.' You had a clear and valid case, why did you not argue it?" Adam answered, "I knew that well, Lord, but I did not forget courtesy in Your presence. Because of my love for You I could say nothing." Thus Adam's love stayed firm and was not swayed.

This sacred Law of Love is a watering-place, a fountainhead. It is just like the court of a king where many study the king's laws, his commandments and prohibitions, his government—equal justice for nobles and commons—etc. The edicts of the king are without end, and on them the stability of the country rests. But the status of dervishes and Sufis is one of love for the king. Out

of their love springs conversation with the king, and knowing his mind and heart. What is knowledge of the king's laws, compared with knowing the ruler himself, his mind and heart? There is a vast difference.

The Sufis and their various teachings are like a school with many scholars. The headmaster pays each scholar according to their qualifications, giving to one ten, the next twenty, another thirty. We too dispense our words according to everyone's degree and qualification. "Speaking to each according to the degree of their understanding."

discourse 24

People build these sacred monuments for a particular reason: either to display their generosity for the sake of fame, or to gain a reward in heaven. God should be the true object in honoring the saints, their tombs and graves. The saints do not need to be honored; they are an honor to themselves.

If a lamp desires to be placed up high, it wants this for the sake of others, not for its own sake. What does a lamp care whether it is high or low? It is still a lamp shedding light. But a lamp wants its light to reach others. The sun, if it were not in the height of the heavens would still be the same sun, only the world would fall into darkness. So the sun attains its height not for its own sake, but for the love of others. The saints, too, have gone beyond such things as above and below, and the worship of people.

Look at yourself when you are granted a fragment of ecstasy and a flash of grace from the

other world. In that moment you see no above or below, mastership or discipleship, or even yourself, which is nearer to you than all else. These things do not enter your mind. So how can the saints, who are the windows and doorways for that light and inspiration, be concerned about above and below. Their heart is with God, and God is independent of below and above. This higher and lower belongs to us who have heads and feet.

Mohammed said, "Do not hold me above Jonah, son of Matthew, just because his ascension was in the belly of a whale while my ascension was in heaven upon the Throne." He meant, "God is neither above nor below. His presence is the same, whether in heaven or in the belly of the whale."

There are many who have aims of their own, while God has another goal. God desired the religion of Mohammed to be honored, to be spread abroad and to abide down through time. Consider how many volumes have been written about the Koran. Yet the aim of those writers was to display their own virtuosity.

Zamakhshari filled his Kashshaf with numerous details of grammar, lexicography and rhetoric to display his own learning—but it also fulfilled God's purpose, namely the exaltation of the religion of Mohammed. So, all people do God's work, whether they know it or not. A man and woman satisfy their lust with each other for the sake of their own enjoyment, but the result is the birth of a child. In the same way everyone works for his or her own pleasure and enjoyment, and this is the means of maintaining the order of the world. In reality they are serving God, although that is not their intent.

In the same way, people carve miniature mosques at great expense to beautify their doors and walls. Mecca is the true aim and object of honor, and its honoring is all the greater since that was not their true intention.

The greatness of the saints means nothing in this world. By God, yes, they have an elevation and greatness, but it is beyond space and time. Suppose, for instance, you placed a silver dirham on the roof, and a gold piece under it. Is not the gold still superior in all circumstances? Similarly,

the chaff is above the sieve and the corn falls under it; but how can the chaff be "above" the corn? The superiority of the corn does not come from its position in this world, but from its place in that world of realities.

discourse 25

Someone entered, and Rumi said: He is beloved and humble, like a branch loaded with fruit—the fruit weighs it down. A branch with no fruit raises its head up high, like the white poplar, but when that fruit exceeds all bounds, they put props under the branch so it will not come down altogether.

Mohammed was extremely humble. All the fruits of this world and the next were gathered upon his branch, so of course he was humbler than others. He said, "No one ever preceded the Messenger of God in making a greeting." No one was able to precede the Prophet in offering greetings because he outstripped all others in extreme humility, and always made his greetings first. Even if others had said their greeting first, still his humility came before they could speak, for everyone has learned the humble greeting from him and hear his greeting within themselves before they say a word.

Everything that ancient people or modern people possess is a shadow of the Messenger of God. Though a person's shadow might cross the threshold before them, still they are first. True, their shadow may appear to lead, but this shadow comes from them, and therefore always follows.

Our grace and humility are not made from this present moment; these atoms existed in that primeval time, from those particles and parts of the first Messenger of God. In this hour they become visible again, but this splendor and brightness is ancient. Its original light was altogether purer and brighter and more humble.

Some people see the beginnings of things, and some look to the end. Those who look to the goal are great and mighty, for although their eyes are fixed on this moment; still they look into the world beyond. But those who see the beginning are greater. They say, "Why look to the end? If wheat is sown in the beginning, barley will not grow. If oats are planted, you cannot reap corn." So their gaze is fixed upon the beginning.

Still there are others even greater yet, who look

at neither the beginnings nor the endings—the start and finish do not enter their minds...they are absorbed in God. However, those who are absorbed in worldly things do not see the beginning or end either, but in their case this is out of extreme carelessness—they are the fodder of fools.

So the Man and Woman of God are the foundation.

"But for you,
I would not have created the heavens."

All that exists—honor and humility, authority and high degree—all are our inheritance from Them. All attributes are Their shadow, for everything has manifested from Them.

Whatever this hand does it does as the shadow of Spirit, for Spirit's shadow directs it. In truth, Spirit has no shadow, yet it has a shadow without a shadow, just as 'meaning' has form without form. If the shadow of Spirit were not over us, all of our body would wither away—our hands would no longer grasp, our feet would not know how to walk, our eyes and ears would be lost in

confusion. Therefore, in reality all those actions proceed from Spirit—the body is the instrument of Spirit's tongue.

In the same way, there is a great person, the caliph of their time. They are like the Universal Spirit, and the spirits of humankind are their body. Whatever the people of this world do is in their shadow. If the actions of some are in error, it is because the Universal Spirit has lifted its shadow from their heads. When someone goes mad and acts crazy, everyone knows that reason has left them, and no longer casts its shadow over them. They are far away from the shadow and shelter of Spirit.

Spirit is kin to the angel. Although angels have definite form, while Spirit does not, both possess the same nature and act exactly the same. We should not be fooled by the form when they are identical in every way. If you dissolved an angel's form, nothing would remain but Spirit. Therefore angels are the embodiment of Spirit.

A bird can be molded of wax, complete with feathers and wings, but still it is wax. If you melt it, don't you see that its head and feet, feathers and wings all return to wax? Nothing else

remains. From this we know that it is wax embodied into a certain shape, but wax none the less.

Similarly, ice is nothing but water. When you melt it, only its form dissolves.

The human being was created like this: They took the feathers of an angel, and tied them to the tail of an ass, in hopes that the ass—from the radiance and companionship of the angel—might become an angel, too. So what is so wonderful if this ass became a human? God is able to do all things.

When a child is first born, it is worse than an ass, sticking its hands in filth and then into its mouth to lick. The mother must spank the baby to stop it. The ass at least has some sort of discrimination; when it urinates, it opens its legs so the urine will not trickle on them. Yet the child, who is worse than an ass, God raises into a man or woman. If God should turn the ass into a human, what is so astounding in that? With God, nothing is a cause for astonishment.

At the resurrection, all parts of a person will speak. The philosophers interpret this allegorically. They say: When the hand speaks, perhaps

some sign, like a scratch or abscess, will show on its skin. Then you can say, in a sense that the hand speaks since it gives information, "I ate something causing inflammation, and so I became like this." Or the hand is wounded and becomes black. These signs tell a story, saying "A knife struck me," or "I rubbed myself against a black pot." So much for the philosophers!

The Sunni theologians say: God forbid! No indeed! The hands and feet will speak just as the tongue speaks. On the day of resurrection a person will deny their past saying, "I did not steal." But their hand will answer, "Yes you stole, since I took it." They will then turn to their hand, saying, "You have never spoken before, how can you speak now?" The hand will answer, "God gave us speech, just as It gives all things speech. It gives speech to the door and wall, the stone and clod. What is so astonishing about that?"

You speak with your tongue, yet it is merely a piece of flesh. Your hand is also a piece of flesh. Is your tongue endowed with reason? Yet when God commanded it to speak, it spoke.

Words come according to the attainment of the listener. Speech is like water that flows from a reservoir. How can the water know where they will send it—into the cucumber-patch, the onion-bed, or the rose-garden? But I know this: when water comes in torrents, there the lands are thirsty and extensive. But if only a little trickle flows, that land is small—a little orchard, or a tiny courtyard. The Prophet said, "God inspires wisdom in the tongue of the teacher according to the aspirations of the student." I am a cobbler: the leather is plentiful, but I cut and stitch according to the size of the foot.

I am your mirror,
I am your measure;
As much as your stature is,
So much my treasure.

A worm lives under the earth in darkness. It has no eyes or ears because where it lives it does not need them. Since there is no need, why give eyes and ears to worms? God has no scarcity of eyes and ears and It is not miserly, but It gives according to the need. Anything else becomes a

burden. God's wisdom and grace remove burdens; how could It do otherwise? For instance, if you gave tailors the tools of a carpenter—axe, saw, and a file—you would burden them, since they cannot use such instruments to make clothes. So God gives according to need and no more.

Just as those worms thrive in darkness under the earth, so there are people who are content and satisfied to live in the darkness of this world, having no need for the heavenly world, and no yearning for the Vision. Of what use to them is the eye of clairvoyance or the ear of understanding? Their work in this world needs only the eyes they have. Since they have no desire for the other side, why give them clairvoyance, which would be useless to them?

Do not think that saints
No longer travel upon this road.
Perfect in all life's ways.
Traceless lovers of God.
It is because you cannot see
Their secrets through your eyes,
You fancy in your vain conceit,
No others can gain that prize.

This world continues through heedlessness. If it were not for heedlessness this world would not

remain. Yearning for God, contemplation of the next world, intoxication, and ecstasy—these are the builders of that inner realm. If these true desires revealed themselves to all people, there would be a worldwide exodus. None would remain. Yet God wants both worlds to exist, so It has appointed two sheriffs one heedlessness, the other heedfulness—so that both houses can thrive.

discourse 26

Rumi said: If I appear lacking in gratitude and appreciation for the kindness and support you show me, both directly and indirectly, it is not out of arrogance or indifference, nor is it because I don't know the importance of returning your favor and love. But I am aware from the purity of your efforts that you do these things sincerely for the sake of God, so I leave it to God to thank you. If I concerned myself with thanking you, granting you verbal honor and praising you, it would be as if some part of the treasure that God has set aside for you was already given, some part of your reward had already been paid.

Humble attitudes, offering thanks and applause—these are worldly pleasures. But when you have gone to worldly pains such as the sacrifice of wealth and position, how can worldly pleasure be a satisfactory return? Therefore, I do not offer thanks since that reward should come entirely from God.

No one can eat wealth. Wealth is sought for what it brings, not what it is. With wealth people purchase horses, servant-girls and slaves. Then they display these riches so that others will praise and applaud them. Therefore, it is the world itself that is held up so high, and it is this world that is praised and applauded.

Sheik Nassaj of Bukhara was an honored, spiritual man. Learned and great people came to visit him and knelt at his feet. The Sheik was unlettered, but they loved to hear him expounding on the Koran and Traditions of the Prophet. He would say, “I do not know Arabic. Translate a verse from the Koran so I can tell you its meaning.” They would translate the verse. Then he would begin to explain and reveal the truth in it. He would say, “The Prophet was in such and such a situation when he uttered this verse. The circumstances took place like this…” And he would describe in detail the spiritual level of that situation, the ways leading up to it, and how the Prophet gained that state.

One day a descendant of Ali was praising a certain judge while standing next to the judge, say-

ing, "There is no judge like this man anywhere in the world. He does not take bribes. He dispenses justice amongst others without partiality or favor, purely and sincerely for the sake of God." When Sheik Nassaj heard this he replied, "To say that he doesn't take bribes is certainly a lie. You, an honored descendant of Ali, praise and applaud him to his face, saying that he does not take bribes. Isn't that a bribe? What could be a better bribe than that?"

Sheik Tirmidhi once said, "Saiyid Burhan al-Din expounds truths so well because he has studied the books, secret writings and treatises of the masters." A Sufi answered, "But you study them as well. Why don't you speak like he does?" Tirmidhi replied, "Well, Burhan al-Din has also made great spiritual efforts and accomplishments." The Sufi said, "Why didn't you say that in the first place? You only know how to repeat what you have read; that is the difference. But we are now speaking of something greater than books—you too can speak of that!"

Few care about the other world at all. They have fixed their hearts upon this world entirely.

Some seek these teachings to eat the bread of God, some only to inspect the bread. They want to learn these words just to sell them. These words are like a beautiful bride; if a beautiful maiden is bought to be sold again, how can she love her buyer or fix her heart upon him? Since the pleasure of that merchant comes only in selling, he is as good as impotent. He buys the girl to sell her, not having the manhood and virility to want her for himself.

If a fine Indian sword falls into the hands of an effeminate man, he will take it to sell it. If a mighty Pehlevi bow falls into his hands, he will also sell it since he does not have the strength of arm to draw the bow. He desires that bow for the value of the string, he has no capacity for the string, itself. He is in love merely with what it will bring. When such a man sells the bow, he trades it for rouge and indigo. What else should he do? Marvelous! What could he buy better than that?

These words mean nothing except to the initiated! Beware! Do not say, "I have understood." The more you understand and grasp these words, the farther you will be from understanding them.

Their meaning comes in not understanding. All your troubles, misfortunes and disappointments arise from such understanding. This understanding is a chain for you. You must escape it to gain anything at all.

You say, "I filled my sheep-skin in the sea, but the sea was too great to be contained in my sheep-skin." That is absurd. If you say, "My sheep-skin was lost in the sea," that is excellent! That is the root of the matter. Reason is fine and useful until it brings you to the door of the King. Once you have reached His door, give up reason, for in that hour reason is a sheer loss to you, a highway robber. When you have reached the King, surrender yourself to Him, you have no use then for the how and wherefore.

For instance, you have an uncut cloth you want made into a tunic or a cloak. Reason brings you to a tailor. Until that moment reason is fine, for it brings the cloth to the tailor. Now in that very moment reason must be forgotten and you must abandon yourself wholly to the direction of the tailor. In the same way, reason is fine when you are sick because it brings you to the physi-

cian. After that, reason is of no use to you, since you must surrender yourself to the advice of the physician.

Your companions hear your secret cries of love for God. When they come to you, you will know which of them has that true substance—the responsiveness of Soul. In a train of camels, the camel in rut is easily spotted by its eyes, its manner of walking and its breath.

"Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration."

Although it is the roots of a tree that drink, you can see the results of that drinking through its branches, leaves and fruit. The tree that does not drink withers—how can this stay concealed?

You will hear their loud shouts because they understand paragraphs from a single word you speak, and from a single letter they recognize all the overtones. They are like someone who has studied the Koran; As soon as they hear the first word from a Koran commentary, they understand all the root ideas and questions, since they know its source. They will offer observations on that single word as if to say, "Within the depths of this

subject I know many things and see many things, for I have worked and studied, turning night into day, and I have found the treasures."

"Did We not expand your breast out of love for you?"

The expansion of the breast is infinite. Once that expansive truth has been tasted, we understand much from even one hint. But beginners will only understand, from a word, the meaning of that one word. What inner knowledge and ecstasy can they possess?

Words are spoken according to the capacity of the listeners. If beginners do not know how to draw wisdom out, how can it come forth? Once they breathe in, then wisdom will fill their hearts. But they say, "For heaven's sake, why aren't the words spoken?" The answer is, "For heaven's sake, why don't you draw this wisdom in?" Whoever withholds the power to listen also withholds from the speaker the impulse to speak.

In the time of the Prophet, a certain unbeliever had a Muslim slave who was a man of true substance. One morning the unbeliever ordered his slave, "Fetch basins. I am going to the baths." On

the way they passed by the Prophet praying in the mosque with his companions. The slave said, “Master, for God’s good sake take this bowl for a moment, so that I can make a few genuflections, then I will attend to you.”

Entering the mosque, he prayed. The Prophet came out with his companions. The slave remained alone in the mosque. His master waited for him till mid-morning, then he shouted, “Come out, slave!” The slave answered, “They won’t let me go, as the work has gone beyond bounds.” The master put his head inside the mosque to see who it was that would not let the slave go. Except for a shoe and a shadow he saw no one. Nobody stirred. He said, “Well, who is it that won’t let you come out?” The slave replied, “The same One who will not allow you to come in, the very same One whom you cannot see.”

People always want to see new things that they have not yet seen. Night and day they seek after new experiences. They are slaves of anything they have not yet enjoyed, but become bored and run away from what they have already heard and understood. For this reason the philosophers

reject the Vision of God, saying, "If you can become bored with what you see, this cannot be truth." The Sunni theologians say, "This could occur only if God was single-colored. But in truth He comes forth in a hundred colors, every instant."

"Every day He is upon a task."

If God should reveal Itself a hundred thousand times, not one moment would resemble another. Every instant you see God's display and yet not even one act resembles another. In times of happiness you see one display, in times of weeping you find another. During moments of fear you see one face, during hope another. Since God's creations and His acts vary infinitely, not one like another, so you can be sure the display of His Essence also varies endlessly. You, too, being a single spark of God's flame, change a thousand times every instant and never stay the same.

There are certain seekers of God who proceed from the Koran to God. Others more elect come from God, find the Koran here, and know that God has sent it down.

"We have seen the Remembrance,
and We will watch over it."

Commentators say that this quote refers to the Koran, but it also means, "We have seen in you a substance, a seeking, a yearning. We will watch over that, not letting it go to waste, but will bring it to its rightful place."

Once you say "God", then stand firm under all calamities that rain down upon you. A certain person came to the Prophet and said to him, "Truly I love you." The Prophet said, "Take heed what you say." The person repeated, "Truly I love you." Mohammed said, "Take heed what you say." They said, "Truly I love you." Mohammed said, "Now stand firm, for with my own hand I will slay you. Woe upon you!"

Another person came to the Prophet and said, "I don't want this religion. By God, take it back. Ever since I entered your religion I've had no peace for a single day. My wealth is gone, my spouse has left, my child cannot be found, my respect is destroyed, my strength is sapped, even my lust has disappeared." Mohammed answered,

"What did you expect? Wherever our religion goes it does not return without uprooting that person and sweeping clean their house."

"None but the purified shall touch God."

So long as there remains in you a single trace of self-love, God will not show His face to you. You will not be worthy of His presence. You must become wholly indifferent to yourself and the world, so that Friend can show His face. So, whenever our religion lodges in a heart, it will not withdraw its hand until it brings that heart to God and severs from it all that is untrue.

The Prophet went on to say to that person, "You have no peace because sorrow's purpose is to empty you of previous joys. So long as food fills your stomach, you are not given new food to eat. During elimination, we eat nothing. When we are empty and hungry, then we are given food. Be patient and grieve, for grieving is the emptying of yourself. After you are empty, then joy can enter—a joy with no sorrow, a rose without a thorn, a wine without crop-sickness."

Why, night and day, do you search for quiet and rest? They cannot be found in this world. But

not for one instant do you give up seeking these things. The comfort you find in this world is like a lightning flash that passes but never endures. And what kind of lightning is it? Lightning full of hail, full of rain and snow, full of suffering. For instance, someone sets out for Antalya. They go toward Caesarea hoping to reach Antalya, and never turn back even though it is impossible to reach Antalya by this route. But another who goes by the Antalyan road, though lame and feeble, still they will reach their goal, since that is where the Antalyan road ends.

No task in this world or the next is without suffering. Therefore, devote your suffering to the next world so it will not be wasted. You say, "O Mohammed take away this religion from me, for I can find no rest." How can our religion let anyone go before it brings them to the goal?

There was a certain teacher who, due to poverty, wore only a single garment of cotton in the middle of winter. By chance, torrents of rain brought down a bear out of the mountains, carrying the bear along with its head hidden in the water. The children, seeing its back, cried,

"Teacher, look! A fur coat has fallen into the water, and you are cold. Take it!"

The teacher in dire need and coldness jumped in to catch the fur coat. The bear quickly plunged its claws into the teacher's back. The bear in the water thus caught the teacher.

"Teacher," the children shouted, "either grab the fur coat or let it go and come out!"

"I am letting the fur coat go," answered the teacher, "but the fur coat isn't letting me go. What should I do?"

How can God's love let you go? We should be thankful that God does not let us go. When a child is small it knows nothing but milk and its mother. Yet, God does not leave the child there, but leads it on to eat bread and to play, and in this manner draws it on to the stage of reason. So too in this world—which is in its infancy compared with that other world—God does not leave you here, but brings you on so you can realize that this is infancy and nothing at all. I am amazed at the people who must be dragged to Paradise in chains and fetters.

"Take them and fetter them,
then roast them in Paradise,
then roast them in Union,
then roast them in Beauty,
then roast them in Perfection."

Fishermen do not drag out a fish all at once. Once the hook has entered the fish's throat they reel it in a little so it will lose strength. Then they let it out, and draw it in again, until it weakens. When the hook of Love falls into our throat, God draws us gradually so those bad attributes will leave us little by little.

"There is no God, but God"—that is what the common folk say. The elect believe "There is no Self, but Self." Someone sees in a dream that they are a ruler. They are seated on a throne with servants, chamberlains and princes standing by. They say, "I am ruler, and there is no ruler but I." They say this in their sleep. When they wake up and see no one in the house but themself, they say, "I am, and there is no other than that I Am." To realize this, one must be fully awake.

Every religion denies every other. One group says, "We are the true ones, revelation belongs to

us, all others are false." All the others say exactly the same. So the two and seventy creeds are in agreement that all others are without revelation. They are all in accord that there is no revelation to any other religion, and that out of the lot of them there is but one true path. So, a believer must have discrimination and wisdom to know which one it is. Such discrimination and wisdom is true faith.

Someone said: "The religions that don't know are many, and those that know are few. If we are to occupy ourselves with distinguishing all of them it will be a long business."

Rumi answered: Although there are many who do not know, when you know a few you have known them all. In the same way when you know a single handful of corn, you know all the corn-stacks in the world. If you have tasted sugar once, though halvah is made in a hundred different varieties, still in that halvah you know the sugar.

If these words seem repetitious to you, it is only because you have not yet learned the first lesson, so I must say it every day. There was once a student who was taught for three months, but

never went beyond "A is for apple." The child's father came and said to the teacher, "I never fail to pay your fees. If I have ever failed a payment, please let me know, and I will pay more." The teacher answered, "The failure is not yours, but the child doesn't go beyond this point." The teacher called the student and said, "Say, A is for apple." The child said, "Is for apple," unable to say "A." The teacher said, "You see? Since the child has not passed the first point, how can I give any more?" The father said, "Praise belongs to God."

We do not say, "Praise belongs to God" after a meal because there was a shortage of bread. Bread and blessings are without limit, but the appetite is gone and the guests are sated. That is why we say, "Praise belongs to God."

The bread of revelation is very different from this worldly bread, because even with no appetite you can force yourself to eat as much worldly bread as you want. And since it is inanimate, you can drag it wherever you like. It does not have the spirit to withhold itself from those who are not worthy. But Divine bread is a living wisdom and

a living blessing. As long as you desire nothing else, it comes towards you and becomes your food. But should your desire fail, you will not be able to eat it, even by force. It hides behind the veil and will not show you its face.

(Rumi was telling about the miracles of the saints. He said:) For someone to fly from here to the Kaaba in an instant is not so wonderful, even though there are such stories of saints having done so. But a true miracle is this: that God should bring you from a lowly estate to a high estate, that you should travel from ignorance to reason, from the inanimate to life. Just as at first you were earth and mineral, God brought you to the vegetable world. Then you journeyed from the vegetable world to the animal world, from the animal world to the world of humanity.

These are the true miracles. Through these stations and forms you journeyed, never once thinking or imagining where you would arrive, by which road you would be taken, or how you would be brought. Even so, you will be brought on to a hundred other worlds. Do not doubt it, and if you are told such stories, believe them.

A bowl of poison was brought as a present to Umar. "Of what use is this?" he asked.

They said, "When it is not publicly advisable to kill someone openly, you can give them a little of this. Then they will die secretly. If it is an enemy who cannot be slain with the sword, with a little of this they can be killed clandestinely."

"You have brought me a very good thing," he said. "Give it to me to drink, for within me is a mighty enemy whom the sword cannot reach. I have no greater enemy in the world than he."

"There is no need to drink it all up in one gulp," they told him. "Just one sip is enough. This bowl is sufficient for a hundred thousand people."

"My enemy, too, is not one person," said Umar. "He is a thousand strong, and has overthrown a hundred thousand."

He then seized the cup and drank it all in one draught. At once the assembled multitude all became believers, crying, "Your religion is true!"

"You have all become believers," said Umar, "and yet this infidel within me has not yet become a believer."

What Umar desired was not the faith of the common people. He had that faith and more—indeed, he had the faith of the veracious. He was seeking the faith of the Prophets in absolute certainty. That was what he hoped for.

The report of a lion spread abroad through all parts of the world. It was said this lion had a special quality: Anyone who approached him boldly, and rubbed their hands upon him lovingly, would be unharmed, but if they were afraid and timorous the lion would be enraged against them. Sometimes he even attacked, as if to say, "What is this bad opinion you have of me?"

A certain person, marveling at the rumor, traveled from far away to see the lion. For a year this person endured the rigors of the road, and traveled from town to town. After finally arriving at the thicket and spying the lion from afar, this lion seeker stood still and could advance no closer.

The people said to this person, "You set forth on a long road out of love for this lion. For this creature you have struggled on for a year. Now that you have come so close, why do you stand still? Advance one more step!"

But none of them had the courage to take a further step. They all said, “The steps we took up to here were all easy. Yet this one step we cannot make.”

What Umar desired was that step, to take one step in the presence of the lion towards the lion. That step is a great and rare matter, the concern of only the chosen and intimate of God. Yet this is the true step—the rest are mere footprints. Such faith comes only to prophets who have washed their hands of their own life.

A lover is a wonderful thing. We derive strength, life and growth from even the thought of our beloved. Why is this surprising? Laila’s spirit gave strength to Majnun and became his food. If her image had such power and influence over Majnun, then why should you marvel at the thought of God giving strength to Umar? That was not a mere thought. That was the very soul of all realities! It is just such a thought that maintains this world.

You say “reality” is what you can see and perceive with your senses, otherwise you call it “imagination.” The opposite it true! This world is

what is imagined. Out of reality springs a hundred worlds like this that will rot one day and disappear. Then a new world springs forth, even better than the last. Reality does not become old or new. These are but temporary expressions of what is Real.

An architect sees a building in their thoughts. They picture it to be so tall, so long, its floor angles this way, its courtyard is shaped like this. People do not call this "imagination." But when someone, who knows nothing about building, talks about such details, certainly that is different. As people say, "They are just imagining things."

discourse 27

It is better not to question what Sufis say, since this obliges them to invent a lie. For if a materialist questions a Sufi, the Sufi must give some answer. But how can they be completely truthful with someone incapable of understanding? The materialist's mouth and lips are not able to receive such a delicate morsel. So the Sufi must answer people according to their capacity and experience, namely by inventing an answer that sends them away.

Although everything the Sufi gives out is true and cannot be a lie, yet the first thing a Sufi says is far greater. If this is questioned, then what good is answering with more truth? Even still, the lie given by the Sufi is good for the materialist, and more than right.

A certain dervish had a disciple who used to beg for him. One day out of what they gained from their begging, the disciple brought some food to their master. The dervish ate the food.

That night he had a wet dream.

"Where did you get that food?" he asked the disciple.

"A lovely girl gave it to me," the disciple answered.

"By God," said the dervish, "it is twenty years since I had a wet dream. This is the effect of her morsel."

This shows that the dervish must be careful, they cannot eat every morsel. The dervish is too sensitive. Things will effect them and become visible, just as a little blackness shows on a clean white gown. However, as for a black gown that has become black with grime for many years, if a thousand kinds of filth should trickle on it, it would make no difference.

discourse 28

The long entreating prayer-song of seekers and travelers tells a story of lives occupied in labor and devotion with each effort assigned to its special time. It is as though an overseer of habit draws them to their specific task. For example, when first rising in the morning, they give themselves to contemplation and worship while the mind is quiet and clear. Thus, each performs the service that is suitable to them and comes within the scope of their noble Soul.

There are a hundred thousand ranks. The purer someone becomes, the higher up they are raised. This story of spiritual growth is a long one. Whoever tries to shorten it would shorten their own life and Soul, but for the grace of God. As for the prayer-songs of those who have attained union with God, I must speak within the limits of understanding—for their love and the purity of their voices attract holy spirits, pure angels, and those visitors whom none know but

God—the Silent Ones whose names are hidden from the world out of exceeding jealousy.

You are seated beside them now, but you do not see them. Neither do you hear their speech, their greetings or laughter. Yet what is so marvelous about this? When someone is sick, they see apparitions that others cannot see. Yet these spiritual beings are a thousand times subtler than those apparitions, for while the average person does not see or hear such visions until they are sick, they will not see these spiritual beings before they die. Such spiritual visitors know the refined states and majesty of the saints. They watch from earliest morn, while a thousand other angels and pure spirits wait upon the saints. For this reason the Silent Ones hesitate infinitely—not wanting to intervene in the midst of such a chorus, or disturb the ones they wish to honor.

Slaves are present every morning at the door of the king's palace. Each has a fixed station, a fixed service, and a fixed devotion. Some serve from afar, and the king does not see them nor notice them. All the slaves know which one amongst them has the honor of the king's presence. When

the king leaves, the servants attend to that one from every gate, for there is no greater way to serve the king. That one has taken on the characteristics of the king, and becomes the hearing and sight of the king for all the others.

This is an extremely majestic station, ineffable indeed. The majesty of it cannot be comprehended by spelling out M-a-j-e-s-t-y. If even a small trace of this majesty penetrated the world, the letter "M" would be unwritable, the sound "M" would be unpronounceable, nor could any hint or symbol remain. The whole city would be devastated by the hosts of Light.

"Kings, when they enter a city, disorder it."

A camel enters a house, and the house is devastated, but in that ruin there are a thousand treasures.

Only in ruins may a treasure be found.
In thriving cities a hound is still a hound.

If I have described at length the station of the seekers, how can I explain the states of those who have attained? They have no end—only seekers have an end. The end of all seekers is attainment. What could be the end for those who have

attained union, a union with no separation? No ripe grape returns to an unripe grape. No mature fruit ever becomes raw again.

Yes, it is unlawful to speak
Of these things to men and women.
But once Thy Name is mentioned, O God,
These words pour out for them.
By God, I will not make it long. I will make it short.
My life is consumed, but You turn
That life to wine.
You say that all is given, but take
This Soul as Thine.

Whoever cuts this story short, it is as if they are abandoning the right road and taking a road into the life-destroying wilderness, where they say, "These trees look like the right way home."

discourse 29

A Christian by the name of al-Jarrah said: "A number of Sheik Sadr al-Din's companions drank with me, and they said, "Jesus is God, as you claim. We confess that to be truth, but we conceal and deny it to preserve the honor of our community."

Rumi said: God forbid! These are the words of those drunken with the wine of Satan, the misguider. How could it be that Jesus, with such a frail body, who was forced to flee from the plotting Jews, place after place, who stood less than two cubits tall, should be the preserver of the seven heavens—each with a thickness of five hundred years, and from each heaven to the next a distance of five hundred years, and every earth five hundred years, and from each earth to the next five hundred years? And under this Throne, the sea of spirit whose depth is even greater, even many times the like of it? How could your reason accept that the ruler of all these is the feeblest of

forms? Moreover, that before being born, Jesus was the creator of the heavens and the earth? Glory be to God, above what the wrongdoers assert!

The Christian said: "His body was mere dust. Dust went to dust, and pure spirit to pure spirit."

Rumi said: If the spirit of Jesus was God, where went his spirit? Spirit returns to its Origin and Creator. If he was himself the Origin and Creator, where should he go?

The Christian said: "So we found it stated, and we took it as our religion."

Rumi answered: If you find and inherit your parents' false gold, black and corrupt, do you mean you will not change it for gold of sound quality, free of alloy and adulteration? No, you keep that gold, saying, "We found it so."

Or you inherit from your parents a paralyzed hand, and you find a treatment and a physician to heal that hand. Do you accept it? No, instead you say, "I found my hand paralyzed, and I will not change it." Or if you find salt water on a farm where your parents died and you were brought up, but you are shown another farm whose water

is sweet, whose herbs are wholesome, whose people are healthy. Do you desire to move to that other farm and drink the sweet water that would rid you of all diseases and ailments? No, you say, "We found this farm with its salt water and its ailments, and we hold on to what we found."

God forbid! This is not the action or the words of an intelligent person possessed of sound senses. God gave you an intelligence of your own separate from your parents' intelligence, a sight of your own other than your father's sight, a discrimination of your own. Why do you nullify your sight and your intelligence, following an intelligence that will mislead and destroy you?

Yutash—his father was a cobbler. Yet when he attained the Sultan's presence, learning the manner of kings and how to be Master of the Sword and the Sultan conferred on him the highest rank, he never said, "I found my father a cobbler, so I do not want this post. Give me, O Sultan, a shop in the market so I can practice cobbling." Indeed, even a dog, for all its baseness, once it has learned to become a hunter for the Sultan, forgets how it was raised, skulking in rubbish heaps and waste-

lands and craving for carrion. On the contrary, it follows the Sultan's horses and pursues the game. It is the same with the hawk. When the Sultan has trained it, it never says, "I inherited from my father desolate haunts in the mountains and the devouring of dead things, so I will not heed the Sultan's drum, or his game."

If the intellect of the beast can choose something better than what it inherited from its parents, it is monstrous and horrible that a human being, superior to all the inhabitants of the earth in reason and discrimination, should be less than a beast. We take refuge in God from that!

Certainly it is right to say that God honored Jesus and drew him close, so that whoever serves Jesus has served the Lord, whoever obeys him has obeyed the Lord. But since God sends a prophet in every age, manifesting by their hand all that was manifested by Jesus' hand and more, it behooves us to follow that prophet—not for the sake of the prophet, but for the sake of God.

Only God can be served for Its own sake. Therefore, only God is truly loved. Love for all else ends in God. So, love a thing only for God,

and seek a thing only for God, until in the end you come to God and love It for Itself.

To dress up the Kaaba is a vain desire,
God's presence is all the cloth you need.

Just as worn-out and ragged clothes conceal the elegance of wealth and grandeur, so excellent clothes and fine raiment conceal the mark and beauty and perfection of the saint. When the saint's clothes are in shreds and patches, then their heart is revealed.

discourse 30

There are heads that are adorned by crowns of gold, and there are heads whose beautiful curls are merely hidden by jewels and gold. The curls of our heart's beloved arouse love, and love is the throne-room of the heart. But a crown is nothing but metal and stones.

We sought everywhere for Solomon's ring. We found his wisdom far from riches. Abandoning wealth we found that beautiful treasure. In poverty we took our repose, and our Beloved was pleased with nothing so much as this.

Well, I am a whoremonger. Since I was young, I have been a seller of love. I know this destroys barriers and consumes the veils of the heart. Love is the root of all obedience; all else is mere adornment. If you do not sacrifice, how can you gain your heart's desire? Giving up everything leads to annihilation, the source of all pleasures where no separation exists.

"And God is with the patient."

In every shop or potion, every merchandise or trade, the end of the thread for each one of these is the need of the human spirit. Until the need arises, the end of that thread is hidden. With every religion, every faith, every grace, every miracle, and all the states of the prophets—the end of each thread is within us. Until the need appears, the end of that thread remains invisible.

"All things are numbered and clearly recorded."

Someone asked: "Is the source of good and evil one thing or two?"

Rumi said: From the point of view that they are continually at war with one another, the answer is obviously two—since a person cannot be opposed to himself. But, from the viewpoint that evil is inseparable from good—for good is the giving up of evil, and the giving up of evil is impossible without evil, and were it not for the incitement of evil, no one would ever abandon the good—from this point of view they are not two. The Magians said that Yazdan is the creator of good things and Ahriman is the creator of evil and hateful things. But desirable things are never

separated from hated things. The desirable cannot exist without the hateful, since what we like is always compared to what we hate, and the more we think evil of one thing, the more we desire its opposite. Joy is the end of sorrow; the end of sorrow without joy is impossible. So they are one and indivisible.

Until a thing passes away, its true meaning cannot be known. No one's life can be judged until it is finished, because what starts evil can turn out good. And until words pass away into speech, who can know their purpose?

Whoever criticizes a Sufi in reality does the Sufi a good turn, for the Sufi shies away from praise. The Sufi is an enemy of vanity, hence whoever speaks evil of the Sufi's ego, speaks evil of the Sufi's enemy, and therefore helps them. "Things become clear through their opposites." So the Sufi knows the critic is not really their enemy, but their friend.

I am like a smiling garden surrounded by a wall of filth and thorns. Those passing by do not see the garden; they see only the wall and ridicule it. Why then would the garden be angry with

them? The critics only hold themselves back, because to reach the garden they must first cross the wall. So by finding fault with the wall, they send themselves far away from the garden and work to their own destruction. The Prophet said, "I laugh as I slay," meaning he kills the unbelievers in one manner, so that unbelievers will not kill themselves in a hundred ways. So, of course, he laughs as he slays.

discourse 31

The police are always in search of thieves to capture, and thieves are always running away. It is rare indeed to find a thief that searches for the police to be captured and thrown in jail. That's not a natural desire for thieves.

God said to Abu Yazid, "What do you desire, Abu Yazid?" He answered, "I desire not to desire."

To be wholly without desire—that is not a natural desire, since a person must empty themself and cease to be. But God wanted to perfect Abu Yazid and to make him a complete Sheikh, so that within him there would be no room for duality or separation, and only complete union and unity would prevail.

There are various classes and different ranks on the spiritual path. Through effort and struggle, some have attained the station that can refuse every desire. That is within the scope of some. But to allow not even an itch of desire to enter the

heart—that is not within the scope of anyone. Only God's love can take that out.

It is stated that after Mohammed and the Prophets revelation will not be sent down upon anyone else, but this is not true. This is why Mohammed said, "The believer sees with the Light of God." When someone sees with God's Light, they see all things, the first and last, the visible and invisible, for how can anything be hidden from God's Light? If anything is hidden, then that is not God's Light. Therefore this is revelation, whether they call it revelation or not.

When Uthman became caliph, he stepped up into the pulpit. The people waited to see what he would say. He was silent and said nothing. He looked steadily at the people, and a state of ecstasy descended upon them so that they were unable to move, and could not tell where they were. Not by a hundred preachings and sermons could such an excellent state have been shown to them. Precious lessons were imparted and secrets revealed. Until the very end, he only looked at them like this, not saying a word. Then, just before leaving the pulpit, he said, "It is better for

you to have a working Imam than a speaking Imam."

What he said was the truth. If the purpose of speaking is to communicate instruction delicately to uplift the people, that had been accomplished many times better without words. So what Uthman said was perfectly correct. During the time he was in the pulpit he did no external work visible to the people; he did not pray, he did not go on the pilgrimage, he did not give alms, he did not commemorate God, he did not even speak the caliph's address. Therefore, know that work and action are not limited to the outer form only, rather these visible forms of work are merely a shadow of that true work of Soul.

The Prophet said, "My Companions are like stars; Whichever of them you follow, you will be guided right." When someone follows a star and finds their way by it, the star does not speak. Merely by looking at the star, they discover that invisible road and reach their goal. In the same way, it is possible by merely gazing at God's saints to find the spiritual path. Without words, without

questioning, without speech, the purpose is achieved.

In all the world there is nothing more difficult than enduring the ridiculous. Suppose for instance that you have studied a certain book, corrected, amended, and fully recited it. Then someone sitting beside you reads the book all wrong. Can you endure that? No, it is impossible. However, if you never read the book, it makes no difference to you whether anyone reads it wrong or right—you cannot tell the difference. So, enduring the ridiculous is a great discipline.

The prophets and saints do not shirk discipline. Their first discipline is to slay this self that is controlled by desires and lusts. That is the "Greater Holy War." When they achieve this, and establish themselves in the station of security, then wrong and right become revealed to them. Yet they are still engaged in a great struggle, for these mortals do everything wrong. The saints see this and must endure it. If they do not, and speak out declaring those mortals wrong, not one person in Heaven or on Earth will stand beside them. But

God bestows on the saints a great and mighty capacity to endure. Out of a hundred wrong acts, they mention one, so that it will not become difficult to overcome. The other mistakes they hide and even praise, saying, "That wrong of yours is right," so that little by little they can overcome this ignorance.

It is the same when a teacher is teaching a child how to write. When the child writes their first whole line, the child runs to show it to the teacher. In the teacher's eyes it is filled with mistakes, but the teacher speaks to the child kindly and encourages them, "That is excellent. You have written well. Bravo, bravo! Only this letter is not quite right, this is how it should be. And this other letter looks like this." The teacher calls a few letters wrong out of that line, and shows the child how they ought to be written. The rest is praised, so the child will not lose heart. The child's weakness gathers strength from that approval, and so gradually they are taught and assisted on their way.

We hope that God will grant the Amir all the designs of his heart. We hope God will also grant

the Amir those good fortunes that he does not even know of, so that when his heart sees those true gifts of God, he will be ashamed of his former wishes and desires.

That is called a true gift when we find what is beyond our own imagination. For whatever enters a person's imagination is a measure of their ambition and capacity. But God's gift is a measure of God's capacity.

"What the eye has not seen,
Nor the ear heard,
Nor has entered into the heart of anyone."

Whatever you conceive of God's bounty, God transcends all that.

discourse 32

Knowingness is the perfect Sheik. Inspired and true thoughts are His disciples ranked according God's closeness to them. As each thought expands it comes nearer to knowingness and farther from doubt.

All thoughts suck milk at the breast of certainty, and grow. Theory and practice nourish each thought until it approaches certainty. Then thought passes away into certainty, for, in knowingness, thought no longer remains.

The sheikhs and their disciples in the world today are reflections of that Sheikh of Knowingness. The disciples are proof that although the form of teaching changes from age to age, generation after generation, that Sheikh of Certainty and the Lovers of Truth are eternal, and never change.

Errant and doubtful thoughts are the outcast disciples of the Sheikh of Knowingness. Every day they wander further from the truth, and fall deeper into darkness.

"In their hearts is a sickness,
And God increases their sickness."
The masters eat dates, but prisoners eat thorns.
"Save those who return to truth,
And do righteous deeds.
God will change their evil
Into good."

Every experience leads us to certainty, even acts of corruption. Like the cunning thief who repents and joins the police force, all their thieving tricks now become a power for justice. They are more certain than all the other policemen who were never thieves, since having stolen they know the ways of thieves. If they should then become a Sheikh they would be perfect, the Elder of the world and the Mahdi of the age.

discourse 33

Everyone is in the midst of their own need. No living creature can be separated from its need.

"Their need cleaves to them closer
Than their father and mother."

That need is their leash, drawing them this way and that, just like a nose-ring and chain. Now, who would make a leash for themself? That is absurd—so someone else must have made it for them.

If we are in the midst of our own need, we are also in the midst of the One who gives us that need. If we are constantly attached to our own leash, we are always connected to the One who draws that leash. But if our eyes are fixed upon our chain, we lose strength and hope. Rather our eyes should be fixed on the One who draws that chain. Then we gladly surrender and accept our limitations. For that leash is around our neck only to reveal the One who holds it.

"Stay away," they said. "Do not approach."

How can I keep away, when you are my need?
God gives elders a youthful passion that young people have no knowledge of.
Great is old age,
When the grey hairs appear,
And playfulness runs amok.

Such an elder sees the world with a freshness, as if it were new. They laugh and play.

They ask, "When someone passes eighty, will they play?"

"Will they play before eighty?" I say.

So the glory of old age is greater than God's display. In spring, God shows Its grace, frail and smiling. In autumn, old age prevails. The worldly garden is ruined. The apparent bounty is gone.

God is beyond everything
That the forces of destruction can sling.

discourse 34

Rumi said: I saw our friend in a dream in the form of a wild animal with the skin of a fox upon him. He was on a small balcony, looking down the stairs. I moved as if to grab him and he raised his hands, leaping about like this and that. Then I saw Jalal al-Tibrizi with him in the form of a weasel.

Our friend shied away, but I caught him when he tried to bite me. I put his head under my foot and squeezed it hard until all its contents came out. I looked at the fineness of his skin and said, "This deserves to be filled with gold and precious stones, pearls and rubies, and things even more excellent than that." Then I said, "I have taken what I wanted. Shy away, shy one. Go where you will, and leap whatever direction you like!"

He leapt about because he feared being mastered, yet in being mastered his true happiness resides. No doubt he was formed of meteor fragments, his heart was drenched, and he wanted to

know all things. He started out upon this road with great desires and he struggled hard to keep to the path and take refuge in it, but that is not enough. For the Sheikh of Divine Grace is not snared with such nets, nor can such game be captured this way. If the Sheikh of God is honest and true, he is completely free to determine who will have him. He cannot be trapped without his free consent.

Our friend sat covertly watching for his prey, but that prey was watching him in his hidyhole, and his cunning. That prey is a free agent whose ways have no limit. He does not pass by everyone's hole. He only passes the ways he, himself, has charted.

"God's earth is wide,
But none comprehend Its knowledge,
Except as It wills."

Even when such subtleties as these fell upon our friend's tongue and understanding they were ruined and lost their fine essence. Just as everything, whether corrupt or true, when it falls into a Lover of God's mouth and comprehension is also changed, becoming swathed and wrapped up

in graces and miracles. Do you not see how the rod held in Moses' hand did not remain as it was? So, too, with the Moaning Pillar and the Stick in the hand of the Prophet, and prayer in the mouth of Moses, and iron in David's hand—they did not remain in their original form, but were changed. So, too, with subtleties and sacred words, when they fall into the hand of darkness and brute intellect, they are changed as well.

The Kaaba is a tavern for your prayers.
So long as it comes from you, your essence shares.

The unbeliever eats in seven stomachs, and Jalal al-Tibrizi eats in seventy stomachs. Even if he has only one stomach, still he eats in seventy stomachs, because everything that is hateful is hateful just as everything from the beloved is beloved. If our friend had returned, I would have sat with him and counseled him, and not left until he drove Jalal far away. For Jalal is a corrupter of our friend's faith, heart, spirit and reason. If only Jalal had induced our friend to corrupt practices other than religion, such as drinking wine and singing girls—for those can be put right when treated by a Sheikh of Divine Grace. But Jalal

filled our friend's house with prayer rugs—would that Jalal were rolled up in them and burned, so that our friend might escape from such misleading! But Jalal has poisoned our friend's trust in the Sheikh of God, ridiculing the Sheikh to his face, while our friend says nothing and destroys himself. Jalal has snared our friend with rosaries, litanies and prayer carpets.

Perhaps one day God will open the eyes of our friend, and he will see what ruined him and drove him far away from the compassion of the Sheikh of God. Then he will strike himself with his own hand, saying, "You destroyed me. Now I have committed these heavy crimes and evil acts. It is exactly the way they saw it in their revelations—the foulness of my deeds, and my vile and sinful beliefs, were hidden behind my own back in the corner of my house. I, myself, was concealing them from the Sheikh of God and burying them, while He saw everything and said, "What are you hiding? By God's will, if I had summoned those foul forms, they would have marched out before me one by one, visibly, uncovering themselves, telling their true nature, and what they concealed

within them." May God save all those who are wronged by these highwaymen, who block the path of God by way of "devotion!"

Kings play polo to show the people of their city an example of the warrior's skill—the lopping off of the enemies' heads, rolling them around just as the balls roll in the field, the warrior's frontal charge, attack and retreat. This play in the park is only a symbol for that serious business of war. In the same way, the people of God perform spiritual prayers and dances to show something of their inmost heart—how they follow their discipline and their path. The singer who leads them is like the Imam at a ritual Moslem prayer. The people follow his lead. If he sings slowly, they dance slowly. If he sings fast, they dance fast. It is only a reflection of how within their hearts they follow the summoning of God.

discourse 35

I am amazed by those who know the Koran by heart yet understand nothing of the spiritual states of the Sufis. As the Koran states, "And do not obey every paltry asserter."

Look at the slanderers when they read this, they are exactly the ones who will say, "Do not listen to So-and-so, no matter what they say, for they will act the same way against you."

"Backbiter, going about with slander,
Hinderer of good."

The Koran is a marvelous magician. It speaks clearly to the ears of the hinderers so that they understand but are not one whit wiser. They don't even catch an inkling of the Koran's true delights.

"God has set a seal…"

How wonderfully gracious God is! It sets a seal on those who listen and do not understand, argue and yet learn nothing. God is gracious. Its wrath is gracious, and even Its lock is gracious. But Its lock is nothing next to Its unlocking, for the grace

of that is indescribable. If I shatter into pieces, it is through the infinite grace of God's unlocking.

Beware, do not think I am sick and dying. That is only a veil. My slayer is this grace of God's and Its incomparableness. The dagger of illness flashes forth to distract the eyes of strangers, so that no profane and defiled eyes can perceive Its secret slaying.

discourse 36

All forms spring from Love, as branches spring forth from their root. No branch can exist without its root. Therefore, God is not called a form, since form is the branch. How can God be called a branch?

Someone said: "Love too cannot be expressed or experienced without form. Hence it is the branch of form."

Why cannot Love be a form without form? On the contrary, Love is the sculptor of form. A hundred thousand forms are raised up on Love's pottery wheel. Although a painter cannot exist without paintings, still painting is the branch and the painter is the root. As the finger moves, so moves the ring.

Until someone has love for a house, no architect will draw up designs. In the same way, corn is at the price of gold one year, another year it is at the price of dust. The form of the corn is the same—therefore its value comes from love. The

sciences you study with such love—in your eyes they are valuable. But when no one pursues them and no one wants to learn from them, then who will teach those sciences?

Someone said: “Love is the want and need for a certain thing. Hence the need is the root, and that thing needed is its branch.”

These words of yours are also spoken out of need. First you had the desire for these words, then they were born. So the need existed first and then your words were born from it. This means your need existed, in the beginning, without any words. Therefore, love and need are not the branches of words.

Someone said: “But after all, the goal of that need was these words, so how can the goal be the branch?”

The branch is always the goal. The tree’s roots exist for the sake of its branches.

discourse 37

Rumi said: The stories that have been spread against this girl are lies and should go no further. But I can see that even though we may put aside these rumors as false, something has settled in the imagination. Our imagination and heart are like a vestibule—thoughts first enter the vestibule, then they move into the house.

This whole world is like one house, and every image that lodges in our deepest thoughts must appear and become visible in the house. For instance, this house in which we are seated—the form of it first became visible in the heart of the architect, then this house came into being. Imagination, daydreams and thoughts are the vestibule of this house. Whatever you see entering the vestibule, know that one day it will become visible in the house. And all these things, good and evil alike that you see in the world today, all first appeared in the vestibule before becoming visible here.

When God wishes to produce rare and wonderful things in this world; orchards, gardens, meadows and sciences, It first implants the desire and demand for them in our inward hearts. And so, everything you see in this world existed first in that inner world. For instance, what you see in the dew also exists in the ocean, for this dew is from that ocean. In the same way this creation of heaven and earth, and all the other marvels, God implanted the desire for these in the spirits of the ancients, and so the world came into being accordingly.

The philosophers who say that the world is eternal—how can they be taken seriously? Their statement simply means the world was never created in time, and this claim is impossible to prove. But those who say it is created in time; they are the saints and the prophets who are more ancient than the world. God implanted desire for the world within their spirits, and only then did the world appear. So they know for a fact and report out of their own experience that the world was created in time.

For instance, those of us who watched when this house was built know it did not exist until a few years ago. If living creatures were born in this house, such as scorpions, mice, snakes and other creatures, to them this house was already standing. If they should say, “This house is eternal,” that is no proof to us, for we saw when this house was created. Termites and ants that have grown up in the walls and woodwork know nothing else, just as the people who have grown up within the house of this world. Here they sprout up, and here they will die, knowing nothing else. If they say that the world is eternal, that is no proof to the prophets and saints who existed millions of years before the world. Why speak of years? This is no place for numbers of years…they are infinite and beyond counting. They saw this world come into existence, just as you have seen when this house was first raised.

discourse 38

The Prophet was seated with his Companions. Some unbelievers began to denounce and lecture him. He said, "Well, you all agree there is one person in the world who receives revelation. Revelation descends upon him—it does not descend on everyone. That person has certain marks and signs in his actions and words, and in his mien and in every part of him the token and mark can be seen. Since you have seen those tokens, turn your faces towards him and hold to him firmly, so he can be your protector."

They were all confounded by his argument and were left with nothing more to say. So they put their hands on their swords and began to threaten, torment and insult his Companions. The Prophet said, "Be patient, so they cannot say they have prevailed over us. They want to make the religion manifest by force. God will manifest this religion."

For some time the Companions prayed and pronounced the name of Mohammed secretly.

Then after a while the revelation came; "You too unsheathe the sword and make war!"

Mohammed is not called "unlettered" because he was incapable of writing or reading. He is called "unlettered" because with him writing and wisdom were innate, not taught. He who inscribes characters on the face of the moon, is such a man not able to write? And what is there in all the world that he does not know, seeing that all people learn from him? What can the partial intellect know that the Universal Intellect does not possess?

The fact that we compose books and create buildings is nothing new. We have seen this done before, and we merely add to what we have already seen. But those who bring into this world something new of their own account, they are the Universal Intellect. We are capable of learning and need to be taught. The Universal Intellect is the teacher, and is not in need. So, if we investigate all trades, at the root and origin of them all is revelation. We have learned everything from the prophets and the Universal Intellect.

When Cain slew Abel and did not know what to do next, he saw a raven kill another raven, dig

the earth, and bury the body, scattering dust on its head. Cain learned from the raven how to make a grave and how to bury the dead. So it is with all the professions. Everyone who possesses a partial intellect is in need of learning, and the Universal Intellect is the source they are seeking. The prophets and saints have united the partial intellect and Universal Intellect so the two have become one.

For instance, the foot learns from the mind how to walk. The hand learns from the heart how to embrace. The eye and ear learn how to see and hear. If the heart and mind did not exist, how could the body function?

This body is coarse and gross compared to both mind and heart. Without their subtlety and freshness, the body remains useless and crude. So the partial intellect is like a tool for the Universal Intellect, and we learn and find our purpose from there.

Someone said, "Remember us in your intention. Intention is the root of the matter. If there are no words, let there be no words. Words are the branch."

Rumi said: Well, intention first exists in the inner world before entering this world of form. So if form does not matter, what is the purpose of this world? If you plant only the kernel of an apricot stone, nothing will grow. If you plant it with its husk, then it becomes a tree. From this we know that form also has a function. Yes, prayer is an inward matter: "There is no prayer without the heart being present." But it is still necessary to bring the prayer into form. With outward words, genuflection, and prostration, you gain benefit and attain your desire.

The outer form of prayer is temporary, the inner spirit never ends. For the Spirit of the world is an infinite ocean, the body but a limited shore. Therefore, continual prayer belongs only to the spirit, but that inward prayer must manifest. Until intention and form are wedded, there are no children born.

When you say that words are the branch, this is only a relative term. Until the branch exists how can the term "root" gain its meaning? So the meaning of root came out of this branch. If the branch had not existed, it could never have had a

name. When you speak of woman, there must also be man. When you speak of a Master, there must be a student. When you speak of the Ruler, there must be one ruled.

discourse 39

Husam al-Din Arzanjani, before entering the service and society of dervishes, was a great debater. Wherever he went, he engaged vigorously in argument and controversy. He used to debate well and spoke excellently, but once he took up the company of dervishes his heart turned completely against debate.

"Whoever desires to sit next to God, let them sit with lovers of God." These intellectual sciences are a game and a waste of life, compared to the spiritual experiences of the dervishes.

This way of desirelessness is the way to attain your desires. Whatever you have longed for will come to you on this path, whether the shattering of armies, victory over your enemy, capturing kingdoms, bringing people to obedience, excelling your contemporaries, or elegance of speech. When you have chosen the way of poverty, these things come to you. No one has ever traveled this road and had cause to complain, contrary to other ways where only one out of a hundred

thousand reach their goal, and even they do not always find happiness and peace. For every desire has many branching paths to reach that goal. It is long and arduous, full of pitfalls and obstacles, and in the end it is possible those twisting paths will fall short of your desire.

However, once you enter the world of poverty and practice it, God bestows on you kingdoms and worlds you never imagined, and you feel quite ashamed of what you longed for at first. "Ah!" you cry. "With such reality in existence, how could I have sought after such foolishness?" But God says, "If only you had risen above such desires, becoming detached from them and seeing them for what they were, all would have been well. Yet now, when they enter your thoughts and you avoid them for My sake, My grace is infinite, so of course I make them attainable to you."

So it happened with Mohammed. Before he attained his goal and became famous, he listened to the elegant speech and eloquence of the Arabs, and he wished that he too could speak so well. Yet, once the invisible worlds were revealed to him, and he became drunk with God, his heart

turned completely against that desire and longing. God declared, “I have given you the elegance and eloquence that you sought.” The Prophet answered, “Lord, of what use are they to me? I am indifferent to them and have no desire for them.” God replied, “Do not worry. Your original desire shall come to pass, and yet your indifference will remain, so that desire cannot harm you.” God bestowed on him such speech that the entire world, from his time until today, has composed and still composes volumes expounding it, and yet people fall short of comprehending all that it contains. God also declared, “Your Companions, out of weakness and fear for their lives, whisper your name only in secret. But I will publish your greatness abroad so that men and women will shout it aloud in sweet intonations five times daily on the high minarets in all regions of the world. Your name will be famous in the east and the west.”

It is the same with anyone who gambles their life upon this way, to them all objectives whether religious or mundane become attainable. None have ever had cause to complain.

The words of the Saints are the true coin; the words of others are but imitation. Imitation is a branch of the true coin. Imitation is like a wooden carving in the shape of a foot, that wooden foot was filched from a real foot and shaped to its measure. If no foot existed, how could there be a copy? Therefore some speech is true coin, and some imitation. They resemble each other. Only discrimination can recognize the difference. This critical perception is real faith.

Do you not see how Moses threw down his rod and it became a serpent, and the staffs and ropes of the magicians also became serpents, but Pharaoh who lacked insight saw no difference between them, while Moses who possessed discernment could see truth from sorcery? Through discrimination Moses became a believer. So we realize that faith is discrimination.

The root of our judgement is Divine revelation. But after mingling with the thoughts, senses and desires of mortal creatures, that original grace has vanished. How does our judgement resemble the delicacy of revelation now?

This is like the water that flows in Turut towards the city. There, at its fountainhead, see how pure and fine it is! But once it enters the city, and passes through the gardens, quarters and houses of the inhabitants, so many people wash their hands, faces, feet and others parts in it, and their clothes and carpets, and the urine of all the people and the dung of horses and mules is poured into it. Look at this water when it passes out the other side of the city! It is still the same water, able to turn dust into clay, quench the thirsty, make the field green, yet discrimination can see the water is polluted and has lost its original clarity.

Water that never grows stale—that is what we need. Water that can cleanse the impurities of the world, and yet they leave no trace in it. It retains its limpid and clear state, and is never tainted. This is the Water of Truth.

So, faith is discrimination, distinguishing truth from falsehood and the true coin from the fake. These words are valuable to everyone possessing that critical perception, but are wasted on those

who cannot see the difference. If these words fall into the hands of those who cannot discern, it is like giving precious pearls to children who do not know their value. Later, if you offer them apples they will gladly trade them for pearls, since they know no better.

Abu Yazid, when a child, was taken by his father to school to learn jurisprudence. When he was brought before the schoolmaster he asked, "Is this the jurisprudence of God?" They said, "This is the jurisprudence of Abu Hanifa." He said, "I want the jurisprudence of God." When he was brought before the grammar teacher, he asked, "Is this the grammar of God?" The teacher said, "This is the grammar of Sibawaihi." Abu Yazid said, "I do not want it." He spoke this way wherever his father took him. His father could do nothing with him, and finally let him be. Later he came to Baghdad upon his quest, and as soon as he saw Junaid he shouted, "This is the jurisprudence of God!"

How could it be that a lamb would not recognize its own mother on whose milk it has been suckled? So, forget the form.

There was a certain Sheikh who kept his disciples standing with their hands folded in service. They asked him, "Sheikh, why do you not let this class sit down? This is not the practice of dervishes, this is the custom of princes and kings." He replied, "No. Be silent. You must respect this way to gain full benefit. Though respect lies within the heart, yet 'the outer is the frontispiece of the inner.'"

From the frontispiece of a book, people know what it contains. From outward respect, bowing the head and standing, can be seen what respect they have inwardly, and their respect for God.

discourse 40

Jauhar, the Sultan's servant, said, "We have been told that we must repeat the Muslim credo five times during our lifetime. What if we don't understand the words, or do not memorize them correctly? After death, what questions will we be asked, seeing that we have forgotten even the questions we were taught?"

Rumi replied: If you forget what you have learned, then of course you become a clean slate suitable for questions that you have not learned.

Now, this minute, you are listening to me. You accept some part of what I say because you have heard similar things before, but some you only half accept, and concerning other things you hesitate. No one hears this rejection or acceptance, or the debate going on within you. Even though you are listening, no sound or voice comes to your ear from within you. If you search inwardly, you will find no instrument of speech.

This coming of yours, to visit me, is itself a question without a throat or tongue, namely,

"Show me a way, and explain what you have shown." My sitting with you, whether silent or speaking, is an answer to your hidden questions. When you wait upon the king, that is a question addressed to the king and an answer. Every day the king questions his servants without tongue: "How do you stand? How do you eat? How do you look?" If anyone has a wry look within them, their answer inevitably comes out awry and they cannot give a straight answer. In the same way someone who stammers, however much they wish to speak straight, is unable to do so. A goldsmith who rubs gold against a stone is questioning the gold, and gold answers, "This is I. I am pure." Or, "I am alloyed."

The crucible knows after you've been tested
Whether you are gold,
Or merely copper with gold covering.

Hunger is a questioning of nature: "There is a crack in the body's house. Give a brick. Give clay." Eating is an answer: "Take." Not eating is also an answer: "Wait until later. The brick is not yet dry." The physician comes and takes our pulse. That is a question—the throbbing of the

vein is the answer. Examining the urine is an unspoken question and answer. To cast a seed into the ground is a question: "Will you give fruit?" The growing of the tree is an answer without a tongue. Because the answer is wordless, the question must be wordless, too.

A king read three letters from the same man, but did not answer. The subject wrote a complaint, saying, "Three times now I have petitioned your majesty. Let your majesty at least say whether my petition has been accepted or rejected." The king wrote on the back of the letter, "Do you not know that refusing an answer is an answer itself, and that the answer to a fool is silence?"

A tree's not growing is a refusal to answer, and is an answer itself. Every motion people make is a question. Whatever happens to them, whether sorrow or joy, is an answer. If they hear a pleasant answer, they show their thanks. Thanks is expressed by asking the same kind of question again. If they hear an unpleasant answer, they quickly ask God's forgiveness and do not repeat that kind of question.

"If only, when Our might came upon them,
They had been humble!
But their hearts were hard."

In other words, they did not understand that the answer they received came from the question they asked.

"And Satan decked out fair to them
What they were doing."

This means they saw the answer to their question but said, "This ugly answer is not appropriate to our fair question." They did not realize that smoke comes from the fuel, not the fire. The drier the fuel, the cleaner the flame. If you entrust your garden to a gardener, and you smell a disagreeable odor, suspect the gardener and not the garden.

Someone said, "Why did you kill your mother?" The other answered, "I saw her sleeping with a strange man." The first person said, "You should have killed the stranger." The second one said, "Then I would be killing someone every day."

Therefore, whatever happens to you, correct your own self, then you will not have to fight with someone every day. If others say, "Everything is from God," we reply: Then to reproach one's own

self and to let the world be is also from God.

This is like the story of a boy who shook down apricots from a tree and ate them. The owner of the orchard caught him and said, "Aren't you afraid of God's punishment?" The boy said, "Why should I be afraid? The tree belongs to God, and I am God's servant. God's servant ate God's fruit!" The owner said, "Wait and see what answer I shall give you. Fetch a rope, tie him to this tree and beat him until the answer is made clear!" The boy said, "Aren't you afraid of God's punishment?" The owner answered, "Why should I be afraid? You are God's servant, and this is God's stick. I am beating God's servant with God's stick!"

The moral is that this world is like an echo—whatever you say, whether good or evil, you hear the same from the mountain. If you think, "I spoke beautifully and the mountain gave an ugly answer," this is impossible. When the nightingale sings in the mountain, does the mountain return the voice of a raven or a donkey? Know for certain then that you have spoken like a donkey!

Speak sweetly when crossing the mountain pass,
Why do you bray like an ass?
The azure sky sends back the note,
Of sweetness from your own throat.

discourse 41

We are like bowls on the surface of the water. The direction a bowl moves is controlled not by the bowl, but by the water.

Someone said: “That is a general statement. But some people know they are on the surface of the water, while some do not know.”

Rumi said: If that is a general statement, then the specific statement, “The heart of the believer is between two fingers of the All-Merciful” would mean nothing. It was also said, “The All-Merciful has taught the Koran.” This cannot be a general statement. God taught all the sciences, so what is this particular reference to the Koran?

Similarly, “He created the heavens and the earth.” Why specifically the heavens and the earth, since He created all things? True, all bowls travel on the surface of the water of Omnipotence and Divine Will, but it is poor manners to refer to God as “O Creator of dung and farting and wind-breaking.” Instead we say, “O Creator of the

heavens," and "O Creator of intelligence." So this distinction, although general, is an indication of choiceness and value.

The upshot is that the bowls travel on the surface of the water, and the water carries one bowl so that every other bowl gazes upon it. The water carries another bowl so that every bowl runs away instinctively, and feels ashamed seeing it. The water inspires them to run away and implants in them the power to move away, saying, "O God, take us farther away." But in the first case they say, "O God, bring us closer to this one."

The person who thinks this is a general situation says, "Both bowls are equally controlled by the water." We say, "If only you saw the grace, beauty and pretty sauntering of this bowl on the water, you would have no desire to call such movement general." In the same way, it would never occur to a lover to say, "My beloved and I are co-partners in the work and filth that results from two people sharing a certain space with bodies that decay." How could anyone apply such a cold description to their beloved?

Since you only recognize the general attributes, not seeing our particular beauty, it is not proper arguing with you, for our words are commingled with beauty and it is wrong to reveal beauty to those who do not love beauty.

This is the science of potential, it is not the science of argumentation. Roses and fruit-blossoms do not bloom in the autumn, for that would confront and compete with autumn. It is not in the nature of the rose to confront autumn. If the sun has done its work, the rose comes out in its proper season, otherwise it draws in its head and retires within its stem. Autumn says to it, "If you are not barren, confront me!" The rose says, "In your presence I am barren and a coward. Say whatever you will!"

O monarch of all truthful folk,
How can I be called a hypocrite?
With living people I am alive,
And with the dead as dead I sit.

If some old crone without any teeth, her face all wrinkled like the back of a lizard, came to you and said, "If you are a man and a true youth, behold, I have come before you! Behold the horse

and the fair one that sits upon it. Behold the open field. Show manliness, if you are a man!" You would say, "God be my refuge! I am no man. What they have told you is all lies. If you are the mate, unmanliness is most attractive!"

A scorpion comes and raises its stinger against your leg, saying, "I have heard you are someone who laughs and is happy. Laugh, so that I can hear your laughter." In such a case you would say, "Now that you have come I have no laughter. What they have told you is lies. My desire to laugh has been replaced with the hope that you will go far away!"

Someone said to Rumi: "When you sighed a moment ago, the ecstasy departed. Do not sigh, so the ecstasy will not leave."

Rumi answered: Sometimes that ecstasy departs if you do not sigh. Otherwise, Mohammed would not have said,

"Abraham was a man who sighed, a merciful man."

Nor would it be right to show any act of obedience to God, for all displays of obedience are ecstasy.

You say this because you want the ecstasy to continue. When someone induces ecstasy, you look after them to continue your experience. This is like shouting to a sleeper, "Arise! It is day. The caravan is off." Others say, "Don't shout. She is in ecstasy. You will drive her ecstasy away." You answer, "That ecstasy of sleep is destruction, this ecstasy of wakefulness is birth and growth." They say, "Don't make a confusion, for this shouting is disturbing." You answer, "This shouting will make the sleeper think. How can she think while sleeping?"

So shouting is of two kinds. If the shouters are greater in knowledge, their shouting will cause an increase in thought. Since they are people of knowledge and of wakefulness, when they awaken others out of their slumber they show the sleepers their own world and draw them higher. However, when the awakener is lower in awareness and awakens others, the gaze of those sleeping is pulled down. Since the shouter's knowledge is lower down, inevitably the gaze of those shouted at drops downward to the lower world.

discourse 42

People who are interested in their scholarly studies think that if they faithfully attend our meetings they will forget and lose all they have learned. On the contrary, when they come here their sciences acquire soul. For all sciences, when they acquire soul, are like an empty body that springs to life. The heart of knowledge originates beyond this world of letters and language. It comes to us from that world where speech is without sound or sign.

"And to Moses, God spoke directly."

Well, God did not speak with letters and sounds, with throat and tongue. Letters require a throat and lips to be heard. God is exalted far above lips, mouth and throat. So prophets in that world speak with God in a way that partial intelligences cannot imagine or understand. Yet the prophets come down from that world without letters into this world of letters, and become children for the sake of these children. Thus, Mohammed said, "I was sent as a teacher."

Although the masses of people in this world do not reach the spiritual states of the prophets, still this world derives strength from the saints, and grows and finds comfort in them. In the same way, an infant, not knowing or recognizing its mother in detail, still finds comfort and derives strength from her. Just as the fruit is nourished by the branch, becoming sweet and ripe, yet knows nothing of the tree. So, the great saints, with their letters and speech, though the masses do not know them, still the people gain strength from the saints and are nourished.

There is fixed within soul—beyond reason, letter and sound—a macrocosm. But look at how many seek out those demented gurus who make outrageous claims. People think, "what these gurus say may be true. Such things might exist, even if they are wrong in this case. Not everything can be known by reason and logic." But this doesn't mean that everything outside of reason and logic is true. "Every nut is round, but not every round thing is a nut," is a sign of that.

Although a saint has a state that cannot be expressed through words and writing, still from

the saint's presence reason grows and develops. This cannot be found from those demented ones around whom the masses circle. No one who visits them is transformed beyond their own state, and no one finds completeness through such guidance. People might think they have found completeness, but that is not what we call completeness. Just like a child who is separated from its mother finds comfort for a moment with someone else, this is not what we call comfort, since the child has simply made a mistake.

Physicians say that whatever is agreeable to the temperament and brings satisfaction gives strength and purifies the blood. However, this is only true when someone is without disease. For instance, a bilious person finds sour things agreeable, and sugar disagreeable, because their taste has become changed by their own distemper. And so the truly agreeable is what is agreeable to someone before they fall sick. For example, a woman breaks her hand and then hangs it in a sling so that it heals all crooked. Her surgeon must make the bones straight and set them to their original form. This is not agreeable to the

woman. Indeed, she finds it painful. Being crooked is much more agreeable to her. So the surgeon says, "First of all your hand was straight, and you found comfort in that. When you broke it, you felt pain and suffered. Although being crooked is more agreeable to you now, this comfort is false and means nothing."

Beings in the world of pure spirit find the commemoration of God and absorption in God agreeable, like the angels. However, if they fall sick through connection with the body, and eating sour things becomes agreeable to them, then the prophets and saints who are physicians, say, "This is not really what you want. This agreeableness is a lie. Your real desire is for something else that you have forgotten. What is agreeable to your original and sound temperament is what you truly want. But since this sickness now seems appealing, you do not recognize the truth."

A Sufi was seated before a grammarian. The grammarian said, "A word must be one of three things: either it is a noun, a verb, or a particle." The Gnostic tore his robe and cried, "Alas!

Twenty years of my life striving and seeking have gone to the winds, for I labored in the hope that there was another word beyond this. Now you have destroyed my hope." Though the Sufi had already attained the Word he sought, he said this to arouse the grammarian.

The greater the number of guests, the larger they make the house, the more furniture they bring in, and the more food they prepare. This is why the stature of little children is small, and their thoughts too, which are their guests, are appropriate to the house of their bodies. They know nothing except milk and their nurses. When they grow older the guests, their thoughts, also increase, and their house of reason, perception and discrimination expands. When the guests of passionate love arrive, they are too much for the house. They demolish it and build anew.

God's veils and God's scouts and troops cannot be contained in God's house. God's veils cannot hide Its door. To accommodate infinite guests, an infinite station is required. When God's veils are hung, they shed light and dissolve all shadows, so

that the secret things become manifest. This is opposite of the veils in this present world, that add to the shadows.

I suffer wrongs that will not be said.
None will hear my excuse or cries.
Just as the candle weeps,
No one knows if the tears it sheds,
Come from its closeness to the fire
Or the longing of the bee's wax for the honey's sweetness, now parted.

This whole world is the prisoner of destiny, and destiny is the prisoner of beauty. Beauty reveals, it does not conceal.

God has certain servants that are men who, when they see a woman in a veil, command her, "Remove your veil so we may see your face and who you are. When you pass by veiled, we are distracted, wondering, 'What manner of person is this that passes before us.' We are not like those who are attracted and enslaved by you if they see your face. It has been a long time now that God has made us innocent and free from such charms. We are quite secure. You will not disturb us or tempt us. But it is when we do not see you that we are disturbed, wondering, 'Who is this?'"

These men are very different from others who are driven by their desires. If other men see the faces of beauty, they are captivated and become disturbed. Therefore, it is better for these beauties to hide themselves, so as not to tempt such men. As for the Sufis, however, it is better to show their faces, to spare God's servants the distraction.

Someone said: "In Khvarizm, no one falls in love, because in Khvarizm there are many beautiful women. No sooner do they see a beauty and fix their hearts on her, than they see another still more beautiful, and the first one is forgotten."

Rumi said: If there are no lovers for the beauties of Khvarizm, then certainly there are lovers of Khvarizm, itself, seeing the many beauties in that land. But the "Khvarizm" I speak of is poverty, where countless mystical and spiritual forms show their faces. Each one you turn to and find comfort in, leads to yet another more beautiful, so that you forget all before. On and on this leads—ad infinitum. So let us be lovers of poverty, where such true beauties are found.

discourse 43

Our friend, Saif al-Bukhari has gone to Egypt. Everyone likes a mirror, and is in love with reflections of their own attributes and attainments, but our friend misses the true nature of his face. He thinks this bodily veil is a face, and the mirror of this veil is the mirror of his face. Uncover your face, so you can know for sure that I am a mirror of your true self.

Someone said: "I know for a fact that the prophets and saints are all victims of a false presumption. There is nothing to it but mere pretense."

Rumi said: Do you say this at random, or have you looked into this before speaking? If you have looked into this, then this pretension you have seen is itself a vision, and therefore a proof of their vision. Indeed, such knowingness is the most precious and noblest thing in existence. The proof of the prophets' message is simply their own claim to such vision, which you have acknowledged

yourself. Such vision only manifests through great longing and seeking. Your own statement still portrays the existence of a seeker, desire and vision. Thus, the relationship between seekers and God is a case where all disclaimers of love prove only love.

They say, “That crowd are disciples of a dimwit, and venerate the fool.” I say, “That ‘dimwit’ of a Sheikh is no less than a stone or an idol.” Those who worship stones venerate and magnify them. They direct their hopes and longings toward them, and their petitions, needs and tears. The stone knows nothing, nor can it feel anything of this. Yet God has made stones and idols to be the means of devotion, of which the stones and idols are totally unaware.

In the same way, these disciples are in love with the image of this foolish Sheikh, and the Sheikh is oblivious to their “banishment,” “union” and all the phases of their love life.

If misguided and misdirected love for a phantom can produce ecstasy, still it is nothing like the mutual love enjoyed with a real beloved, who is aware and wide awake to the lover’s condition.

Like the person who embraces a pillar in the dark, thinking it to be their beloved, the pleasure they enjoy cannot be compared with one who embraces their living and conscious friend.

discourse 44

Everyone who sets out on a journey has a particular idea in mind: "Once I arrive I will be able to gain advantages and improve my affairs. My business will be set in order, my friends will be delighted, and I shall defeat my enemies." Such are the ideas we have in mind, but God's objective is something else. We make so many plans and think through so many ideas, and not one turns out according to our desire. Yet even with all of that, we continue to rely upon our own plans and choices.

Ignoring Fate, people plot their little plans.
God's Will does not consult with the plans of man.

This is illustrated by the woman who sees in a dream that she has chanced into a strange city where no one knows her, and she knows no one else. She becomes bewildered, and depressed, saying to herself, "Why did I come to this city where I have no friend nor acquaintance to shake me by the hand, or press me on the lip?" On awakening,

this city and its people vanish, and she realizes that all her anguish and sorrow were over nothing. So she disregards the state she found herself in, thinking her worries were quite wasted. However, the next time she falls asleep, she sees herself in exactly such a city again, and begins to feel the same sorrow and loneliness. She regrets coming to such a city and doesn't remember when she was awake how foolish she see it was to worry, since it was only a dream and nothing to grieve about.

This is exactly how people are. They have seen their desires come to nothing a hundred thousand times. Nothing proceeds according to their intricate plans. But God appoints an oblivion to cover their eyes, so they forget all that has happened, and once again they plan out their own ideas and wills.

"God stands between people and their hearts."

Once, when Ibrahim, son of Adham, was king, he galloped in the track of a deer he was hunting, until he became entirely separated from his soldiers, leaving them far behind. His horse was weary and covered with sweat, but still he chased

on. After passing far into the desert wilderness, the deer suddenly stopped, turned back its face and said, "You were not created for this. Beingness was not brought forth from not-being for you to hunt me. Even if you catch me, what will you have accomplished?"

When Ibrahim heard these words, he cried aloud and flung himself from the horse. There was no one in that desert except a shepherd. Ibrahim said to him, "Take my royal robes encrusted with jewels, my arms and my horse, and give me your gown of coarse cloth. And please tell no one, not even a hint to anyone, what has become of me." He put on the rough gown and set out on his way. Now consider what his intention was, and yet what his true objective turned out to be! He wanted to catch a deer, but God caught him by means of that deer. Therefore, realize that in this world things happen as God wills. His is the design, and all purpose comes from Him.

Before becoming a Muslim, Umar entered his sister's house. His sister was chanting from the Koran in a loud voice:

"TA HA: We have not sent down..."

When she saw her brother she immediately hid the Koran, and became silent. Umar bared his sword saying, "Tell me what you were reading and why you hid it or this very instant I will chop off your head!" His sister feared him, knowing his temper when angry, and in terror for her life she confessed, "I was reading from these words that God revealed to Mohammed."

"Read on, so that I can hear," said Umar, and she recited the whole of the Sura of Ta Ha. Umar became furious, and in a rage he waved his sword, saying, "If I killed you this instant, it would be a killing of the defenseless. First I will go and cut off Mohammed's head, then I will attend to you."

In his anger, holding a naked sword, Umar set off for the Prophet's mosque. The chieftains of Quraish, seeing him go by, exclaimed, "Wonderful! Umar is after Mohammed. Surely, if anyone can stop this new religion, Umar can." For Umar was a mighty and powerful man. Any army he marched against was vanquished. In fact, the Prophet had many times declared, "God, suc-

cor my religion by means of Umar or Abu Jahl." For those two were famous in that time for strength and heroism. Afterwards, when Umar became a Muslim, he used to weep and say, "O Messenger of God, woe for me if you had spoken Abu Jahl's name before mine. What would have become of me then? I would have continued in error."

In short, Umar was on his way, with naked sword, making for the Prophet's mosque. Meanwhile Gabriel revealed to Mohammed, "Lo, Messenger of God, Umar is coming to be converted to Islam. Take him to your bosom." Just as Umar entered the door of the mosque, he saw clearly an arrow of light fly from Mohammed, and pierce his heart. Umar uttered a loud cry and fell down insensible. Love and passionate desire filled him, and he wanted to dissolve himself into Mohammed out of extreme affection, and he became nothing. He said, "Prophet of God, offer me your faith and speak your blessed word, so I may hear." Having become a Muslim, he said, "Now, to correct my actions of coming against you with a bared sword, and to cleanse that act,

henceforth I will give quarter to no one I hear speaking wrongly of you. With this sword I will strike their heads from their bodies."

Coming out of the mosque, he suddenly encountered his father. His father said, "You have changed religion." Immediately he struck off his father's head, and walked on holding the blood-stained sword. The chieftains of Quraish, seeing the blood, said to Umar, "You promised to bring back Mohammed's head. Where is his head?" Umar said, "I carry it with me!" One of them said, "You brought his head?" He answered, "No, not that head. The head I bring is from the other side."

Now look at what Umar planned, and what God brought about from those plans. Know that all affairs turn out as God desires.

Abraham said, "O God, since you have chosen me and honored me with the robe of Your approval, grant this distinction to my children also." God declared:

"My covenant shall not reach the evildoers."

When Abraham realized that God does not extend His loving care to the evildoers and the insolent, he tried to strike a bargain. He said, "O

God, those who believe and are not evildoers—give them a portion of Your provision." God declared, "My provision is common to all men and women, and everyone shall have a share of it. All creatures enjoy their portion of benefits from this guesthouse. But the robe of My approval, and the honor of ennoblement and distinction, are a special gift for the elect and chosen ones."

"We appointed the House to be
A place of visitation for the people,
And a sanctuary.
'Take to yourselves Abraham's station
For a place of prayer.'"

The literalists say that what is intended by this "House" is the Kaaba, for in the Kaaba it is forbidden to hunt, and no malice is allowed against anyone. God singled out that House for Itself. This is all perfectly true and fine, but that is the literal interpretation of the Koran. However, the Sufis say that the "House" is the inward part of our beingness. In other words, "God, free my inward self of temptation and worldly plans. Cleanse it of passions and idle thoughts, so that no fear can enter in and security will prevail. Let it become completely the center of Your revelation."

It is said that God has appointed meteors to watch over heaven to prevent the accursed Satans from listening to the secrets of the angels. The meaning of this, according to esotericists, is, "O God, appoint the guardian of Your loving care to watch over our inward house, to drive away from us the temptation of the Satans and the tricks of the carnal desires."

Everyone begins this path from their own place. The Koran is a double-sided brocade. Some enjoy one side, and some the other. Both are true, since God desires that everyone should gain benefit from it. In the same way, a woman has a husband and a child. Each enjoys her in a different way. The child's pleasure is in her breast and her milk. The husband's pleasure is in intercourse with her. Some people are infants of the Way—they take pleasure in the literal meaning of the Koran, and drink that milk. But those who have reached years of full discretion have another enjoyment and a different understanding of the inner meanings of the Koran.

Abraham's station and place of prayer is a certain spot in the Kaaba where the literalists say two inclinations of prayer must be performed.

This is excellent indeed, by God. But according to the Sufis, Abraham's station is that inward state where you should cast yourself into the fire for God's sake, reaching this place through work and effort in God's name. There, people can sacrifice themselves for the sake of God, their own selves having no place in their sight, and they cease to tremble for themselves. To perform two inclinations of prayer at Abraham's station is excellent, but let the standing be performed in this world, and the bowing be in the other world.

The true Kaaba is the heart of the prophets and the saints, the locus of God's revelation. The physical Kaaba is a branch of that. If it were not for the heart, of what use would the Kaaba be? The prophets and the saints forsake their own desire and follow the desire of God. Whatever God commands, they do. Whoever God denies grace, to them the saints are indifferent—indeed in their eyes such a one is an enemy.

Into Your hands we give the reins of our heart.
Whatever you declare cooked, we declare it burnt!

Everything I say is a comparison. Comparison is one thing, and equivalence is another. We liken God's Light to a lamp for the sake of comparison,

and the saints are likened to the glass of that lamp. God's Light is not contained by any being or space, so how can it be contained in a glass lamp? How can the compass of His Light be contained in a heart? Yet seeking, you find it in the heart. Not like some box where that Light resides, but from the heart you find that Light radiating. Like you find your image in a mirror, yet your image is not in the mirror itself. Still, when you look in the mirror you see yourself.

By means of comparison all subtleties become intelligible, and once it is intelligible the senses can grasp it. Thus, they say that in the other world books will fly, some into the right hand and some into the left. There are also angels, the Throne, Heaven and Hell, the Balance, the Reckoning, and the Book: none of this is clear until an analogy is given. There is no likeness to any of these things in this world, yet through comparison they can be known.

For example, by night all people sleep, cobbler and king alike, judge and tailor. Once asleep, their thoughts take wing, and no thought remains to one of them. Then, at dawn, it is as though the

blast of Israfil's trumpet brings life to the atoms of their bodies, and the thoughts of each one, like scrolls from the next world, fly headlong towards each person without any mistake—the tailor's thoughts to the tailor, the lawyer's thoughts to the lawyer, the blacksmith's thoughts to the blacksmith, the oppressor's thoughts to the oppressor, the thoughts of the just to the just. Does anyone sleep through the night as a tailor, and rise by day a cobbler? No, for that work belongs to them, and so they take up their occupation as before. From this you can see that the likeness of each person continues in the other world. This makes sense, because in this world we see the same thing.

If we continue with comparison until we reach the end of this thread, we will witness all the states of the next world in this world. We will sniff out in this world all the circumstances as they correspond to the other world, and we will see that all things are contained in God's omnipotence. Many are the bones moldering in their graves, yet enjoying the sweet repose and drunken sleep of that enjoyment and intoxication. These are not idle words, for the saying goes,

"May the dust lie sweet on them!" If the dust had no awareness of sweetness, why would anyone say such a thing?

I pray that moon-faced idol
May live a hundred years,
My faithful heart a quiver
For the shafts of her tears.
In the dust of her door my heart
So happy, happy died,
Praying, "Lord, may her dust
Forever happily abide!"

A couple are sleeping on one mattress. The woman sees herself in the midst of a banquet, a rose-garden and Paradise, the man sees himself in the midst of snakes, the guardians of Hell, and scorpions. If you investigate, you will see neither Paradise nor Hell. Why then should it be a surprise that the parts of some, even in the tomb, experience pleasure, repose and intoxication, while some are in pain, torment and agony, yet you can see neither pleasure nor pain? Therefore, the invisible becomes sensible through the use of comparison.

Comparison is one thing, equivalence is another. The Gnostics give the name "spring" to relax-

ation, happiness and expansion. They call contraction and sorrow "autumn." What real resemblance is there between happiness and spring, sorrow and autumn? Yet without this comparison the intellect cannot conceive and grasp the meaning. So the Koran declares:

"Not equal are the blind and those with sight,
The shadows and the light,
The shade and the torrid heat."

Here, faith is compared to light and unbelief to shadows, but faith could be related to a delightful shade and unbelief to a burning, merciless sun boiling the brain. What resemblance is there between the bright subtlety of faith and the light of this world, or between the sordid gloom of unbelief and the darkness we know at night?

Do you see this man who has fallen asleep while we were talking? That slumber is not a sign of heedlessness, but safety and security. Like a caravan travelling along a difficult and dangerous road on a dark night, they drive on in fear, lest harm should befall them. But as soon as the voice of a dog, or cock, reaches their ears and they find a village, they are carefree. They stretch out their

legs and sleep sweetly. On the road, where not a sound or murmur would disturb them, they cannot sleep out of fear. But in the village they find security, and with all the barking of dogs and crowing of cocks, still they are happy and fall asleep.

Our words also derive from community and security, they are the sayings of prophets and saints. When soul hears the words of those familiar friends, it feels secure and is delivered from any fear, for upon these words is wafted a scent of hope and felicity.

Just as those travelers on that dark night think that every moment thieves are mingling with their caravan, so they desire to hear the words of their fellow travelers and to recognize them by their words. Once they hear their friends speak they feel secure. The same is true with you. Because your essence is subtle, glances are not enough for us, but if you speak we will then hear that familiar friend of our spirits and feel secure and at peace. So speak!

A certain mouse inhabiting a cornfield is invisible, being so small, but once it makes a sound,

then people know it by means of its sound. And so, people are utterly immersed in the cornfield of this world, and your essence, being extremely subtle, is invisible. So speak, that they may recognize you.

When we long to see a certain place, our heart goes first to experience the conditions there. Then our heart returns and draws our body along. Now all the men and women of this world are like bodies in relation to the saints and the prophets, who are the heart of this world. These beings of the heart first journeyed to the other world, leaving their human attributes of flesh and skin. They surveyed the depths and heights of that world, and traversed all the stages, until they knew the way. Then they came back and summoned mankind, saying, "Come to that original world! For this world is a bleak and empty ruin compared to that garden we have discovered."

From this you should realize that the heart is always attached to its beloved, and has no need to traverse the stages, no need to fear highwaymen, no need of the mule's packsaddle. It is the wretched body that is tied to these things.

I said to my heart,

"How is it you are barred from the service
Of He whose name you bless?"
My heart replied,
"You misread the signs.
I am constantly in His service,
You are the one astray."

Wherever you are, no matter what may happen, always strive to be a lover, a passionate lover. Once love has become your property you will be a lover eternally, in the grave, at the resurrection, or in Paradise, for ever and ever. When you have sown wheat, wheat will surely grow, stocks of wheat will fill the shed, loaves of wheat will fill the oven.

When Majnun wanted to write a letter to Laila, he took a pen in his hand and wrote:

Your name is on my tongue,
Your image is within my sight,
Your memory fills my heart,
Where, then, can I write?

Your image dwells in my sight, Your name never leaves my tongue, Your memory occupies the depths of my soul, so where am I to write, seeing that You are here in all these places? The pen broke, and the page was torn.

Many are those whose heart is full of such reality, but they cannot express the words in terms of speech. This is not surprising, and is no limit to that love. On the contrary, the root of the matter is the heart, yearning, and passion. A child is in love with milk, and from milk it derives succor and strength, yet the child cannot explain milk or describe it, saying, "What pleasure I find in drinking milk, and how weak and anguished I would be without it." The child has no words for it, yet still it desires milk. Most grown people, on the other hand, even though they might describe milk in a thousand ways, still they find no such pleasure or delight in milk like they did as children.

discourse 45

Rumi asked: What is the name of that youth?

Someone said: "Saif al-Din ("Sword of the Faith").

Rumi said: No one can judge a sword while it is still in its scabbard. Truly, the Sword of the Faith is one who defends the way, dedicates their efforts wholly to God, who reveals rightness from error and distinguishes truth from falsehood. But first they correct themselves and improve their own character: "Begin with yourself," said the Prophet.

So they direct all discipline first to themselves, saying, "After all, I too am human. I have hands and feet, ears and understanding, eyes and a mouth. The prophets and saints—who attained God's favor and reached their goal—they were human like me with reason, a tongue, hands and feet. Why were they shown the way? Why is this door that was opened to them, closed to me?" Such a person corrects themselves night and day,

and struggles, saying, "What did I do, that I have not been accepted?" They continue until they become the Sword of God and the Tongue of Truth.

For example, ten people want to enter a house. Nine find the way, but one remains outside and is not allowed in. Certainly this person reflects inwardly and laments, saying, "What did I do that they would keep me out? What bad manners am I guilty of?" That person attributes the fault to themself and recognizes their own errors and lack of manners. They should never say, "God has done this to me, what can I do? It is God's will. If God willed it, I would be shown the way." Such words are tantamount to abusing God and drawing the sword against God. Such a person would be a Sword Against God, not the Sword of God.

God is far beyond having family or friends. "He has not begotten, and has not been begotten," says the Koran. You cannot say that those who have found the way to God were more God's kin, more His friends or more closely connected to Him. No one has ever approached God except from below.

"God is all sufficient,
You are the needy ones."

Nearness to God is never attained, except through devotion and submission. He is the Giver of givers. He fills the skirt of the sea with pearls, He clothes the thorn in the raiment of the rose, He bestows life and spirit upon a handful of dust, all without precedent, all without favorites. All the world receives their share from Him.

When people hear about a generous person who bestows valuable gifts and favors, naturally they want to visit such a giver of wealth, in hopes of receiving a share of that bounty. Since God's Grace is so well known to the entire world, why don't you beg of Him? Why don't you ask Him for robes of honor, or a rich gift? Instead, you sit in indolence saying, "If He wants to He will give to me." So you never ask Him for anything.

A dog, without reason or comprehension, when hungry, comes up to you and wags its tail as if to say, "Give me food. I am hungry by the sight of that food you have. Please give me some." A dog knows that much. Are you less than a dog? The dog is not content to sleep in ashes and say,

"If he wants to he will throw me some food," but begs and wags its tail. So should you wag your tail and beg of God, for in the presence of such a Giver, to ask is the expression of a wonderful desire. If you lack good fortune, ask from One who is not stingy, and a commander of great wealth.

God is always near to you. Every thought and idea you conceive, there is God—for God gave being to that idea and thought. Yet God is so close you cannot see It. What is so strange in that? In every act you perform, reason guides you and initiates your action, but you cannot see your reason. You see its effect, but you cannot see its essence. For instance someone goes to the baths. Wherever they go within the baths, they feel the heat of the fire, even though they do not see the fire itself. When they leave the baths, then they see the actual fire and flames. From this they know that the heat of the baths comes from a fire.

The human being is also a huge bath, and within itself dwells the heat of reason, spirit and the lower self. But once you leave this bath and enter the other world, you see the actual essences. Then

you know that intelligence comes through the glow of reason, that fallacies and pretenses radiate from the lower self, and the impulse of life itself is the result of spirit. You can clearly see the essences of all three, but as long as you are in the bath they are invisible. You can only experience their effect.

When we were in Samarkand, the Khvarizmshah laid siege to Samarkand and attacked with his army. Not far from us lived an exceedingly beautiful girl, so lovely that none could match her in all the city. I heard her saying, "O God, I know You would never allow me to be delivered into the hands of evildoers. I know You would never permit that. I rely on You, O God."

When the city was sacked and all its inhabitants were taken into captivity, even the maidservants of that woman were captured. But she was left unharmed. For all her extreme beauty, no man even cast eyes on her. From this, know that whoever commits themselves to God is secure from harm and remains in safety. No petition of man in God's presence is ever ignored. Therefore beg of God, and demand what you need of God, for your petition will not be in vain.

"Call upon Me and I will answer you."

A certain dervish taught his son that no matter what he needed, "Ask it of God." The years passed. Then one day, while the child was alone in the house, he became hungry. In his usual way he said, "I want some food, I am hungry." Suddenly a bowl of pottage materialized, and the child ate until he was full. When his father and mother returned, they said, "Aren't you hungry?" The child answered, "I just asked for food and ate." His father said, "Praise be to God, that your confidence and reliance upon God has grown so strong!"

When Mary was born, her mother vowed to dedicate Mary to the House of God and not to support her. She left Mary in the Temple. Zachariah demanded to care for the child, but everyone wanted to do so, as well. A dispute sprang up amongst them. Now in that time the custom was that each party in a dispute must throw a stick into water—the one whose stick floated longest was deemed to prevail. It so happened that Zachariah's stick was the right one. They all agreed that he had the right to care for Mary. So every day Zachariah brought food to

the child, but he always found an exact match of that food already at her side. He said, "Mary, I am in charge of you. Where is this food coming from?" Mary said, "Whenever I feel the need for food, I ask God and He sends it to me. His bounty and compassion are infinite. Whoever relies on Him, their trust is not in vain."

Now, after Zachariah saw this he prayed, "O God, since You allow the need of this child, please grant me my desire. Give me a son who will be Your friend, who, without my prompting, will walk with You and be occupied in obedience to You." God brought John into being, even though his father was bent and feeble, and his mother was very old and had not borne a single child while she was young. Still, she became pregnant and gave birth.

Don't you see that all these things are but an occasion for the display of God's omnipotence? Everything came from Him, and His will must always come to pass. The believer knows that behind this wall there is Someone who is aware of every circumstance in our lives, one by one, and who sees us though we do not see Him. But those

who say, "No, this is all a tale," they cannot believe. The day will come when they will realize their error.

For instance, you are playing the rebec. Even if you can not see anyone, if you know people are behind this wall listening, you will continue playing, for you are a rebec player. After all, the purpose of prayer is not standing, bowing and prostrating all day, for those moments of spiritual union that possess you in prayer should always be with you. Whether asleep or awake, writing or reading, in any moment, you should not be far from the remembrance of God.

Speaking and keeping silent, sleeping and eating, being enraged and forgiving—all these attributes should be like the turning of a water mill. Surely the mill revolves because of water, and it knows this, since it has tried to move without water. Any mill that believes it is the source of its own turning is the epitome of foolishness and ignorance.

Now this revolving occurs within a narrow space, for that is the nature of this material world. Therefore, say to God, "O God, grant me anoth-

er turning that is spiritual, since all needs are fulfilled by You." Therefore bring your needs to Him constantly, and never be without His remembrance, for the remembrance of God is strength, feathers and wings to a bird of spirit.

Through remembrance of God, little by little the inward heart becomes illumined and detached from the outward world. Just as a bird that tries flying to heaven, even though it never reaches that goal, yet every moment it rises farther from the earth and outsoars the other birds. Or for instance, some musk is in a jar, but the mouth of that jar is too small, and when you reach in you cannot remove the musk. Still, your hand is perfumed and your nostrils are fulfilled. So it is with the remembrance of God: although in this moment you do not attain the Essence of God, still it leaves its mark on you, and you gain the great benefits that go with that mark.

discourse 46

Sheikh Ibrahim is a noble dervish. When we see him, we are reminded of our beloved friends. Our Master Shams used to refer to him as "our Sheikh Ibrahim," showing his affection.

Divine favor is one thing, but personal effort is another. The prophets did not attain prophethood through personal effort—they gained that fortune through Divine grace. Yet God still required the prophets to live a life of personal effort and virtue. This was for the sake of the common people, so they could put reliance on the prophets and their words. The gaze of ordinary people cannot penetrate into the inward heart—they see only the outward show. Yet, following those externals, through the Divine blessings bestowed on those forms, people find the way to the internal.

After all, even Pharaoh made personal efforts of charity and noble acts, but since God's favor was not present, his generosity and beneficence

remained hidden. Like a military commander who is in charge of a fortress, even when he is kind and generous to the people, if his plan is to throw off allegiance to the king and become a rebel, his kindnesses lose all their worth and luster.

Nevertheless, we should not entirely deny God's favor to Pharaoh. God's grace might have been secret, causing Pharaoh to be rejected for a good purpose. For a king is both vengeful and gracious. He bestows both robes of honor and prison terms. The Sufis do not deny God's favor to Pharaoh completely. The literalists, however, consider Pharaoh wholly rejected, and this is fine for the proper maintenance of the external teaching.

When a king puts a man on the gallows, he hangs him up high in the presence of the assembled people. He could also suspend him indoors, hidden from everyone, by a low nail, but it is necessary for the people to see and take warning. The execution of the king's decrees, and the carrying out of his orders should be visible. But not every gallows consists of wood. High rank and worldly fortune are also a gallows, and a very high one.

When God desires to chastise someone, He grants them high rank in the world and a great kingdom, like Pharaoh, Nimrod and the rest. All those eminent positions are like the gallows from which God hangs people for others to gaze upon and understand.

For God declares, “I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known.” This is to say, “I created all the world to manifest My Reality, now through graciousness, now through severity.” God is not the kind of king for whom one voice is sufficient. If every atom in the world became God’s herald, they would still be unable to properly proclaim His Truth.

Therefore, day and night people are forever revealing God, but while some understand this, others are unaware. In either case, the manifestation of God’s will is certain. For example, a prince orders a man to be beaten, and the man screams and shouts with pain. Still, everyone sees that both beater and beaten are revealing the prince’s authority.

Whoever acknowledges God is revealing God continually, and whoever denies God is also revealing God. For how can anything be demon-

strated without its opposites? Besides, it would be wholly without pleasure and enjoyment. Thus, someone who loves controversy proposes a motion at a meeting, but if there is no reaction or argument, what can he say in return, and what joy is there in that? For a proclamation is only meaningful in the face of its own negation. In the same way, this world is a declaration of God. Without a proposer and an opposer this declaration would seem pale and lifeless.

"The believers are like a single soul."

Dervishes are joined as if by a single body. If one member feels pain, all the others are distressed. An eye gives up its seeing, the ear its hearing, the tongue its speech—all meet in that one body. True friendship is to sacrifice oneself for one's friend. To plunge into danger for our friend's sake. For all are headed towards one and the same goal. All are drowned in one and the same sea. This is the effect of faith, and submission to God. What is the load they carry with their bodies compared to that load they carry with their souls?

Once the believer surrenders to God, why should they give a thought to distress and danger,

to hands and feet? If their journey is to God, what use do they have for limbs? God gave you hands and feet to travel in this world, but when travelling to that One who makes hands and feet, what does it matter if you trip and stumble, or like Pharaoh's sorcerers go crawling on your belly? What cause for grief is that?

Poison is good to sup
When the fair one fills the cup.
Bitter words are sweet to hear
When the speaker is most dear.
Full of pleasure is my love
With that salty wit I know of.
Very pleasing is its smart
Rubbed into my wounded heart.
And God knows best.

discourse 47

God wills both good and evil, but only blesses the good. His Law both commands and prohibits, but commandment is only valid when it is opposed to natural desires. If someone says, “Hungry one, eat sweetness and sugar,” that is not commandment, but a benefaction. Prohibition works in the same way. No one says, “Don’t eat stones, don’t eat thorns,” because there is no need to prohibit when there is no desire.

Therefore, for commandments and prohibition against evil to do any good, people must desire evil. And to will the existence of people who desire evil, is to will evil. But God does not approve of evil, otherwise He would not have commanded the good. This is like those who like to teach—they hope their pupils are ignorant, for they cannot teach unless their pupils need to learn. To desire a thing is to desire the need for that thing. But no teacher approves of their students’ ignorance, or why would they teach?

It is the same with doctors: they want illness to exist, since they could not display their medical skill unless people were sick. But they do not approve of illness, otherwise they would never treat it. Similarly, bakers want people to be hungry so they can ply their trade and earn a living, but they do not approve of hunger, otherwise they would not sell bread.

This is why commanders and cavalry want their king to have an opponent and an enemy. How else can they show their bravery and love for the king? The king would never muster them, having no need. But they do not approve of the king's enemy, or they would not fight. Therefore, we should respect the evil desires within ourselves, because God loves those who are grateful and obedient to His Law, and this means nothing without the existence of those desires within us. Yet, we should not approve of those evil tendencies, but struggle hard to overcome their influence.

Hence, we can see that God wills evil in one respect, but does not will it in another. Our opponents say, "God does not will evil in any way

whatever." That is impossible. How could He will a thing and not will the need for that thing? Amongst the needs that God has created is this headstrong nature in humanity that longs to believe such foolishness as what our opponents say, thus leading people away from truth. The lessons needed by such people are all the evils that exist in this material world. Did God not will those evils? However, if God had approved those evils, He would not have issued commandments and prohibitions against them. This proves that evil is willed for the sake of something greater.

But they still say, "God wills only good, and amongst such good things is abstaining from evil. Therefore, God desires only the averting of evil." But evil cannot be averted unless evil exists. Or they say, "God wills only faith," but faith cannot exist except after disbelief, so disbelief is a prerequisite to faith. Therefore, willing evil is only bad when it is willed for its own sake. When evil is willed for the sake of some good, then it is good.

In the Koran it says, "In retaliation there is life for you." Now, obviously retaliation is evil, being

an attack against God's creation. But this is a partial evil, while guarding people from the need for future killing is a complete good. To create a partial evil for the good of all is not wrong, but to partially abandon God's will while allowing evil to succeed, is wrong indeed. This is like the mother who does not want to scold her child because of the partial evil in punishment, but the father knows he must punish to avert that evil from taking control, and to nip the trouble in the bud.

God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving and Terrible in retribution. Does He will that all these names should be true of Him? The answer must be "yes," because He cannot be All-pardoning and All-forgiving without the existence of sin. Thus, He commands us to be forgiving and to make peace, but this commandment has no meaning without the existence of anger and war.

This is similar to Sadr al-Islam's statement that we are commanded to earn and acquire wealth, because in the Koran it says, "And expend in the way of God." Since it is impossible to spend money unless one has money, then this is also a commandment to acquire money. It is the same

when a man calls out, “Arise and pray.” This is a charge to perform the ritual cleaning with water, and all the functions that precede prayer as well.

discourse 48

When God loves people He afflicts them. If they endure with fortitude, He chooses them. If they are grateful, He elects them. Some men and women are grateful to God for His wrathfulness and some for His graciousness. Both are good, for gratitude is the antidote for all occasions, changing wrath into grace. The wise and complete servant is grateful for harsh treatment, both publicly and in private, for with the voice of gratitude comes the inspiration to give more. Even if God sends them to the lowest reaches of Hell, through gratitude God's purpose is advanced.

Outward complaining is a reflection of inward complaining to God. Mohammed said, "I laugh as I slay." That means, "My laughter in the face of attackers slays their anger and hatred." Laughter, here, is gratitude in place of complaining.

It is related that a certain Jew lived next door to one of the Companions. This Jew lived in an upper room, from which all kinds of dirt and

filth, the piddle of his children, the water his clothes were washed in, fell into the Muslim's apartment below. Yet the Muslim always thanked the Jew, and instructed his family to do the same. For eight years this continued, until the Muslim died. Then the Jew, while visiting the Muslim's apartment, to condole with the family, saw all the filth and how it came from his upper room. He realized what had happened during the past years, and was filled with sorrow. He said to the Muslim's household, "Why on earth didn't you tell me? Why did you always thank me?" They replied, "Our father told us to always be grateful, and chided us if we ever gave up being grateful." So the Jew became a believer.

Examples of virtuous women and men
Encourage the development of virtues within,
Like the melodious minstrel's rhyme
Inspires the passing of wine.

For this reason, God, who is All-powerful and All-forgiving, thanked His prophets and servants for what they did for Him. Now, gratitude for milk to drink is a blessing, but gratitude for those who suck the breast is a Divine blessing. Although

the breast is full, until you suck it the milk does not flow.

Someone asked: "What is it that prevents gratitude?"

Rumi answered: Inordinate greed, for no matter how much people have, greed wants more. Since they get less than what their heart is set upon, they cannot be grateful. But people are unaware of their own defect, and they cannot see the flaw that taints the coin they offer.

Greed is like eating raw meat—inevitably it makes you sick. Once we realize we have eaten something rotten, a purge becomes necessary. God, in His wisdom, makes us suffer through ingratitude to purge and rid us of that corrupt conceit, lest that one sickness becomes a hundred sicknesses.

"And we tried them with good things and evil,
That gratefully they should return."

That is to say, "We planned for people in ways they do not know, such as when they avoid seeing secondary causes as partners with God." It is for this reason that Abu Yazid said, "Lord, I have never associated anything else with You." And

God said, "O Abu Yazid, not even on the night of the milk? You said one night, 'This milk has done me harm.' It is I who create all harm and benefit." Abu Yazid had seen the secondary causes as separate from God, so God showed him up as a believer in many causes and said, "It is I who harmed you, after the milk and before the milk. I made that milk so you would sin, and I made that harm as a correction to teach you, like a teacher's punishment."

When a teacher says, "Don't eat the fruit," if the students eat it, and the teacher beats them on the soles of their feet, it is not right for the pupils to say, "We ate the fruit and it hurt our feet." In the same way, whoever refuses to acknowledge that all things are partners to God, God uses ingratitude to cleanse their spirit from the weeds of believing in many causes. A little with God is much.

The difference between giving praise and giving thanks is that thanks are given for benefits we receive. No one says, "I give thanks for that person's beauty and bravery." Praise giving is less personal.

discourse 49

Rumi said: A man was leading the prayers, and chanted from the Koran:

"The Bedouins are stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy."

By chance a Bedouin chieftain was present. He gave the chanter a good box on the ears. During the second genuflection, the leader of the prayers chanted a different quote from the Koran:

"Some of the Bedouins believe in God
and the Last Day."

The Bedouin exclaimed, "Ha! That slap has taught you better manners!"

Every moment we receive a slap from the unseen world. Whatever our plans—one slap and we take another course. As the saying goes, "We have no power of our own, it is all a swallowing up and a vomiting." The meaning of "swallowing" is descending into this lower world and becoming a part of it. The meaning of "vomiting" is expelling falsehood out of the heart. For

instance, if people eat food that turns sour in their stomach, they vomit it. If they did not cast out that poison, it would become a part of them.

The disciple dances and serves to find a place in the heart of the sheik. Anything the disciple does that displeases the sheik is cast forth from the sheik's heart, like the food we eat and then vomit. Just as bad food would become part of us, unless we rejected it, so that disciple's poor conduct in time would become a part of the sheik, unless the sheik cast such actions out of their heart.

God's love was proclaimed to the world
And every heart into confusion was hurled,
Those hearts were burned and into ashes turned
Then to the indifferent wind their ashes spurned.

In that wind of indifference the atoms of those hearts are dancing and singing. If they are not, then how do we hear their song, and who is it every moment that tells their tale anew? And if these hearts do not realize their very life consists in burning up and spurning to the wind, how is it they are so eager to be burned? As for those hearts burned up in the fire of worldly lusts and

turned into ashes, do you hear any sound or see any luster from them?

The poet, Urwa ibn Adhina, wrote, "I know well the way God provides our daily bread. What use is there in running about here and there with no purpose? Truly, when I forget about money, food, clothing and the desires of lust, my daily portion comes to me. But when I run after those desires, they only bring me pain and wear me out. If I sit where I belong, with patience, my needs are fulfilled without pain and distress. For truly, my daily supply is also seeking me and tugging at me. When it cannot pull me it comes to me, just as when I cannot attract it I go after it."

The upshot of these words is this: absorb yourself with the World to come so that World will pursue you. "Sitting" means to sit detached from this world while being absorbed in the affairs of the world to come. Those who run for the sake of the other World, they are truly seated. If they are seated for the sake of the present world, they are running. The Prophet said, "Whoever reduces all their cares to a single care, God fulfills all their other needs." If someone is plagued by ten cares

let them worry only about that care for the other World, and God will untangle those other nine knots without any effort.

The prophets cared nothing about fame and daily bread. Their only care was God's approval, and yet they received both daily bread and fame. Whoever seeks God's pleasure will become bed-fellows with the prophets, in this world and the next.

"They are with those whom God has blessed,
Prophets, people of the path and heaven's guests."

"I sit with those who remember Me." If God did not sit with them, the yearning for God would never have entered their hearts. The scent of the rose cannot exist without the rose. The scent of musk never exists without the musk.

There is no end to these words. Even if they do end, still they are not like other words.

The night's departed, still, my friend,
Our story's not yet at an end.

The night and darkness of this world passes away while the light of these words becomes clearer. Even though the night of the prophets' lives have set, still the light of their discourse has not left, nor ended, nor ever will.

People said about Majnun, "He loves Laila, what is so strange in that? After all, they were children together and went to the same school." Majnun said, "They are fools. What pretty woman is not desirable?"

Is there any man whose heart is not stirred by a lovely woman? It is love that feeds our heart, just as the sight of mother, father and brother, the pleasure of children, the pleasure of lust—all forms of delight are rooted in love. Majnun was an example of all lovers, just as in grammar other sentences are quoted.

Feast on sweetmeats or on roast,
Drink the wine that you love most.
What's that savor on your lips?
Water that a dreamer sips!
When tomorrow you arise,
And great thirst upon you lies,
Little use will be that deep
Draught you've taken while asleep.

The delights of this world are the same as people who eat while asleep. They chase after worldly needs just as if they were looking for something in a dream. Even if they find it, once they are awake what good will it do them if they have eaten while asleep? Yet, still, what they ask for in

their sleep they are given, for "The present is proportionate to the request."

discourse 50

Someone said: "We have studied all aspects of the human condition one by one, and not so much as a single hair-tip of human temperament, or people's hot and cold nature, has escaped our notice. Yet, we still have not discovered what aspect of the human being survives death."

Rumi said: If such knowledge were attainable merely by asking others, there would be no need for the effort and the work, and no one would put themselves through such pain and sacrifice to know. For example, people come to the sea, and see nothing but salt water, sharks and fishes. They say, "Where is this pearl others speak about? Perhaps there is no pearl." How can the pearl be gained merely by looking at the sea? Even if they measured out the sea, cup by cup, a hundred thousand times, they would never find the pearl. A diver is needed to discover that pearl, and not just any diver, but a diver who is both fortunate and nimble.

Humanity's sciences and arts are like measuring the ocean with a cup. To find the pearl calls for something else. There are people gifted with every skill, with wealth and good looks to boot, yet this vital quality is not in them. There are others who are outwardly a wreck, who have neither good looks nor elegant speech, yet in them is this element that is immortal. By this element we are ennobled and honored, and become superior to all other creatures. Leopards, crocodiles, and lions each have their own peculiar skills and abilities, but these qualities will not survive. When a person discovers the essential element, they attain the secret of their own eternal reality.

The accomplishments of the human race are like jewels on the back of a mirror. The mirror's face has no jewels, it must be crystal clear. Whoever has an ugly face eagerly looks for the jewels, since the mirror's face shows every dark secret.

A friend of Joseph returned from a far journey. Joseph asked, "What present have you brought me?" The friend replied, "What is there you do

not possess? What could you need? Since no one exists more handsome than you, I have brought a mirror so that every moment you may gaze in it upon your own face."

What is there that God does not possess? What does He need? Therefore, bring before God a heart, crystal clear, so that He may see His own perfection. "God looks not at your form, nor at your deeds, but at your heart."

You find a city with everything you desire, beautiful people, pleasures, all that people crave, and ornaments of every kind, but you find not one generous person. The opposite would be better than this!

That city is the human being. If in us are a hundred thousand talents, but not that essential element, better if that city were in ruins. But when that vital quality is there, the outward display matters not—our secret heart will be well furnished. In every state our heart is with God, and our outward work does not hinder our inward occupation. In the same way, whether a pregnant woman finds herself at peace or war, sleeping or

eating, the child in her womb is still nourished and continues to grow. The human being is also carrying that secret.

"We offered the Trust to the heavens,
The earth and the mountains,
But they refused to carry it, and were afraid;
Yet humanity carried it. Surely they are sinful,
And very foolish."

But God does not leave us in sin and foolishness. Out of our physical life comes companionship, families, and a thousand familiar friendships. If this Trust that humanity carries also produces friendships and knowledge, what is so strange in that? What rises from a person after death? Look in their secret heart. Their secret heart is like the root of a tree—although hidden, its influence appears in the leaves and branches. If a branch or two is broken when the root is whole, they will grow again, but if the root is damaged, neither bough nor leaf remains.

A farmer from the country came to visit and stay in the house of a friend in town. The town's person offered their friend halvah, which the guest ate with gusto. The farmer said, "O friend, night and day I eat carrots. Now that I have tast-

ed halvah, the pleasure of eating carrots has disappeared. But where I live I can not find halvah every day. What am I to do?" Once a farmer has tasted halvah, they yearn for the place where it is made. The town's person has carried their heart away. What can they do? They come looking for their heart.

Some people, when they greet you, the smell of smoke comes from their greeting. Some, when they speak, the smell of musk lingers on. Only those with a sensitive nose know the difference.

We must test our friends, so that in the end we have no cause for regret. Here is another of God's rules: "Begin with yourself." If you claim to be humble and serve God, do not accept this claim without testing it. When people wash, first they lift some water to their nose and then they taste it. Simply looking at the water is not enough, for water may have the appearance of purity, but its taste and smell will prove if it is infected. Once the test is done, then they wash their faces.

Whatever you keep hidden in your heart, God manifests in you outwardly. Whatever the root of

the tree feeds on in secret, affects the bough and the leaf.

"Their mark is on their faces."

The Koran also says:

"We shall brand them upon the muzzle!"

If you want no one to see into your thoughts, then how will you hide the flush of color on your face?

discourse 51

Rumi said:

Until you see, how can you find?
This is true for all but Lovers:
For how can they seek the Beloved,
Being blind,
Until they have discovered?

The human quest consists of seeking for what has not yet been found. Night and day people are searching for that. But the quest that begins after our desire has been found and attained, that is a strange quest indeed, beyond our imagination and comprehension. The worldly quest is searching for something new, something not yet experienced, but this other quest begins with what we have already found and then desire. This is God's quest, for God is the Finder.

O friend, so long as you thirst for what is created in time, you are far from your goal. But, once your quest passes away into God's quest and Its Quest overrides your own, then you have been found. Then you can truly seek.

A student said: "There is no way to prove who is a friend of God and who has attained union with God. Neither words, nor deeds, nor miracles, nor anything else can offer proof. For words can be mimicked, with practice. As for deeds and miracles, there are those who can read a person's inmost thoughts, and display many wonders through magic."

Rumi asked: Do you believe in anyone or not?

The student answered: "Yes, by God. I both believe and love."

Rumi said: Is this belief of yours, in that person, founded on proof and token? Or did you simply shut your eyes and take up that person?

The student said: "God forbid that my belief should be without proof and token."

Rumi said: Then why do you say there is no proof or token leading to belief? You have contradicted yourself.

Another person said: "Every saint and great mystic has said, 'I enjoy a nearness with God and Divine favor that no one else has known before.'"

Rumi answered: Who made this statement—a saint, or someone else? If it was a saint, then they knew that every saint has had this belief, so how

could a saint believe they are the only recipient of Divine favor? However, if someone other than a saint made this statement, then in truth that one is the friend and elect of God, for God has kept this experience from all the saints but has not hidden it from that one.

The same person tried to support their statement with a parable: "Once there was a king with ten concubines. The concubines said, 'We want to know which of us is dearest to the king.' The king declared, 'Tomorrow this ring shall be in the room of whomever I love best.' Next day the king commanded ten rings to be made identical with that ring, and gave one ring to each maiden."

Rumi said: The question still stands. This story provides no answer, and changes nothing. The statement, "The king loves me best," was made by one of the ten maidens, or by someone else. If one of the ten maidens made this statement, and she knew that each of the maidens had been given a ring just like hers, then how could she feel that she was loved best? However, if this statement was made by someone other than those ten maidens, then that person was truly shown the king's favor and special love.

Someone said: "A true lover must be submissive and abject and long-suffering." And they listed other qualities.

Rumi said: Should the lover be like that whether the beloved wishes it or not? If the lover is this way against the desire of the beloved, then they are no lover but merely following their own desire. If the lover accepts the desire of the beloved, then when their beloved does not want them to be submissive and abject, how could they be submissive and abject? Therefore, the states affecting the lover are unknown, and we can only know how the beloved wishes us to be.

Jesus said, "I wonder at the living creature that can eat a living creature." The literalists say that this refers to people eating the flesh of animals. This is an error. Why? Because when people eat flesh, it is not animal any longer, but inanimate. Once the animal is killed, the living spirit is gone from that flesh. The true meaning of this saying is that the Sheikh mysteriously consumes the disciple. I wonder at a process so extraordinary!

Someone asked the following question: "Abraham said to Nimrod, 'My God brings the dead to life and turns the living into the dead.'

Nimrod said, 'When I banish people, it is the same as causing them to die, and when I appoint someone to a post it is as if I brought them to life.' Then Abraham gave up this argument, being compelled to yield to Nimrod's point. He then embarked on another line of reasoning, saying, 'My God brings the sun up from the east and sends it down in the west. Do the opposite of that!' Isn't this argument at odds with the other?"

Rumi answered: God forbid that Abraham could have been silenced by Nimrod and left without any answer! The truth is that Abraham used his second statement to show how God brings life out of the womb of the east, and sends it back to death in the tomb of the west. Abraham's argument was presented with perfect consistency. God creates us anew every moment, bringing something perfectly fresh into our inner heart. God's first moment is nothing like His second, neither is His second moment like the third. Yet people, being unconscious of themselves, do not see this birth and death.

Sultan Mahmud was given a fine horse, with an exquisite shape. Next festival day he rode that horse, and all the people sat on their rooftops to

see him and enjoy the spectacle. But one drunken fellow wouldn't move from his apartment. By force, they carried him up to the roof, saying, "Come and look at the Sultan's horse!" He said, "I am busy with my own affairs. I don't want to see it." But he could not escape. So he sat there on the edge of the roof, extremely drunk, as the Sultan passed by.

When the drunken fellow saw the Sultan on the horse he cried out, "What do I care about this horse? Why, this very moment if that horse were mine and a minstrel sang even one song, I would give it to him." Hearing this, the Sultan became extremely angry and had the man thrown into prison. A week passed. Then the man sent a message to the Sultan, saying, "What is my crime? What sin did I commit? Let the King of the World state the case so his servant can be informed."

The Sultan ordered the man to be brought into his presence. He said, "You insolent rogue, how could you utter such words? How dare you speak so rudely?" The man answered, "King of the World, it was not I who spoke those words. In that moment a drunken manikin was sitting on

the edge of the roof and spoke those words. This hour I am not that fellow. I am an intelligent and sensible man." The Sultan was delighted by his answer and conferred on him a robe of honor and ordered his release.

Whoever joins us and becomes drunk on this wine, no matter where they go, or whoever they visit, in reality their moments are still spent with us. For the coolness of strangers reminds us of our own friends' gracious company, and mingling with those who do not know this wine stimulates love and desire for those who do.

This is why people prize other fruits above sugar, saying, "We have tasted so much bitterness that we attained the rank of sweetness." How can you know the delight of sweetness until you have suffered the bitter?

discourse 52

Rumi was asked the meaning of the following lines:

When love attains its ultimate goal
Desire turns to dislike.

Rumi explained: Dislike is a narrow world compared to friendship. That is why people run from hatred to find friendship. But the world of friendship is itself narrow next to the Source of both friendship and dislike. Friendship and enmity, unbelief and faith—these are all opposites that lead to duality. Yet a world exists where there is no duality but only pure unity, and when we reach that world we are beyond friendship and dislike. There is no room for two in that world.

When we arrive there, we leave duality behind. The world of freedom we loved and struggled for is narrow next to that state where no opposites exist. Therefore, we no longer desire it, and are repulsed by it.

When Mansur al-Hallaj reached his utmost friendship with God, he became his own enemy

and gave away his life. He said, "I am God," meaning, "I have passed away. God alone remains." This is extreme humility. Your saying, "Thou art God, and I am Your servant," is arrogance, for you have affirmed your own existence, and created dualism. To say, "He is God," is still duality, for until "I" exists "He" is impossible. Therefore it was God alone who said, "I am God," since Mansur had passed away.

The world of imagination is greater than facts and concepts, for all concepts are born of imagination. Yet imagination itself is narrow compared to that world from which imagination is born. This is the limit of explanations, for that reality cannot be made known by words and expressions.

Someone asked: "Then what is the use of expressions and words?"

Rumi answered: Words set you searching. They are not the objects of your quest. If that were the case, there would be no need for all this spiritual struggle and self-sacrifice. Words are like glimpsing something far away. You follow in its trail to see it better, but this doesn't mean the trail is what you are seeking. Speech is inwardly the

same—it excites you to seek the meaning, even though the words are never the reality.

The other day someone said, “I have studied many sciences and mastered many ideas, yet I still do not know what essence in the human being exists forever. I have searched, but I have not discovered it.”

If such things were knowable through words alone, you would never need to pass away from your self and suffer such pains. But if you did not endure the struggle of losing your temporary self, how could you ever know that essence which will remain?

A boy says, “I have heard about the Kaaba, but no matter how far I look I can not see it. I will go up to the roof and search from there.” When he gets to the roof and stretches out his neck, he still can not see the Kaaba, so he rejects that any Kaaba exists. To see the Kaaba takes more than that. It is impossible to see it from the place where one abides.

In the same way, during winter, you hunt for a fur jacket with all your soul, but when summer arrives you fling it away and forget about it. You

sought the coat for the warmth. You were in love with warmth. In winter you can not find warmth and therefore need the medium of the coat, but once the summer sun starts to shine, you fling the fur jacket away.

"When heaven is rent asunder," and "When earth is shaken with a mighty shaking," are references to yourself. They mean that you have experienced the pleasure of being gathered together, but the day is coming when you will experience the pleasure of being torn apart. Then you will behold the expanse of the other world and be delivered from this present narrowness. For instance, if someone is held down by four nails for a long time, they start to feel comfortable with this condition, and forget the pleasure of being free. After they escape the four nails, then they realize the torment they had been in. Similarly, children are swaddled and put to rest in a cradle, and they are perfectly at ease with their hands bound. But if a grown person were cribbed in a cradle, it would be torment and prison.

Some feel pleasure when roses bloom and push forth their heads from the bud. Some feel pleasure

when the petals of the rose become scattered by the wind and rejoin their origin. Therefore, some people want friendship, passion, unbelief and faith all to dissolve and return to their source. For these are walls of form cause narrowness and duality, while the other world is broadness and absolute unity.

These words of themselves have no power. How can they be powerful? They are merely words. In fact, in themselves they can become a cause of weakness. Yet they inspire some to truth. Words are a veil. How can two or three letters combined together cause life and excitement?

When people come to visit and you greet them politely, and welcome them, they are happy and feel affection. If you receive them with two or three words of abuse, those two or three words cause them anger and pain. Now what connection is there between stringing together a few words and an increase in affection, or provocation of anger? God appointed these veils so that no one's gaze can fall upon Its beauty and perfection. Weak veils are appropriate to weak eyes.

Bread in reality is not the cause of life, but God has made it appear to be the cause of life and strength. After all, bread has no human life of itself, so how can it create strength? If it had any life at all, it would have kept itself alive.

discourse 53

Rumi was asked the meaning of the following lines from his Masnavi:

You are that very thought, my brother:
Those bones and nerves are something other.

Rumi said: You should think about this. "That very thought" in reality is not "thought" at all, and if it is, it does not belong to the kind of thought that people usually mean by the term. In using the word "thought" my intention was the "idea" or "essential element." If you need to put this "idea" into a more humdrum way so that common people can understand, then say: "The human being is a speaking animal."

Speech is thought, whether spoken or not. The rest of the human being is animal. Therefore, it is perfectly true to say people consist of thought, and the rest is "bones and nerves." Speech is like the sun, all people derive warmth and life from the sun, and the sun is always there. The entire world is warmed by the sun, yet the sun's rays are

not always visible. When thought is expressed through word or sign, be it thanks or complaint, good or evil, then the sun of speech becomes visible, just as the rays of the celestial sun become visible when they shine upon a wall.

So, the rays from that sun of speech only appear through the medium of letters and sounds. Though always present—for that sun is subtle, and "He is the All-subtle"—some element of grossness is required for it to become visible and apparent.

A certain man said that "God" had no meaning for him, the word left him bewildered and frozen. When they said, "This is God's Creation, these are His Commandments, and these are His Laws," then he felt the warmth of those rays. So, although God's subtlety always existed and shone upon that man, until they explained it to him through the medium of Commandment, Creation and Law, he was unable to see.

There are some people, who, due to illness, cannot use honey. Yet through the medium of some other food, such as mixed into rice dressed with turmeric or halvah, they can eat it. Once

they recover from their illness, however, then they can take honey without any medium.

Therefore, speech is a subtle sun shining continually, without ceasing, and we need some gross medium in order to see and enjoy it. But, once you can see those rays and that subtlety without any gross medium, then you find wonderful colors and marvelous spectacles in the depths of that sea. Yet what is so amazing about that? For speech is always within you, whether you actually speak or not, even if you have no thought of speaking.

Philosophers say, "The human being is a speaking animal." Animality is always within you as long as you are living, just as speech is always within you. Chewing is one expression of animality, it is not a state of itself. In the same way, speaking and talking are only reflections of "Speech."

People have three spiritual states. In the first they have no thought of God at all, but worship and pay service to everything else: friends and lovers, wealth and children, stones and clods. Once they gain a little knowledge and awareness,

then they serve nothing but God. Yet, after learning and seeing more they enter a state of silence. They do not say, "I serve God," nor "I do not serve God," for they have transcended both. No sound issues from these people into the world.

"God is neither present nor absent,
For God is the Creator of both."

All words, all sciences, all skills, all professions derive their flavor and relish from Speech. The end of that chapter cannot be known, however, for they are only expressions, and not the state of itself. This is illustrated by the man, who in seeking the hand of a wealthy and beautiful woman, looks after her sheep and horses, and waters her orchards. Though his time is occupied with those services, their flavor derives from the woman. If the woman were to disappear, those tasks would become cold and lifeless. In this same way, all professions and sciences derive life, pleasure and warmth from the rays of the Saints' inspiration. But for their inspiration, all tasks would be utterly without relish and enjoyment.

discourse 54

Rumi said: When I first began composing poetry, a great urge compelled me. At that time the urge was strong. Now the desire has grown weaker and is declining, but still it has its effect. Such is the way of God. He gives life to things in the time of their rising, producing great results and wisdom, yet in declining His influence still has its force. "The Lord of the East and the West," means, "He fosters both the rising and declining."

The Mutazilites believe that people create their own acts; that every deed springs out of our own creation. But this cannot be true, for everything that we do is produced through our mind, spirit, senses or body. Yet, we haven't created any of these instruments. Since we are not the creator and are not capable of creating such things, then these functions cannot be fully subject to our control. And it is impossible for us to create an act without these instruments.

Therefore, we realize that the true creator of our actions is not our own selves, but God. We

perform every effort of ours, whether good or evil, according to our own plans and purpose, but the wisdom of that deed is not limited to our intentions. We are only able to see that portion of the wisdom and benefits that derive from our actions. God, however, knows the total advantage of that deed, and what fruits it will bear.

For instance, you pray to gain rewards in the next world and to acquire a good name and safety in the present. But the help derived from prayer is not limited to that—it also bestows a hundred thousand advantages you will never understand. Only God, who gives rise to your prayer, knows those advantages.

We are like a bow in the grip of God's hand. God sends us out upon various tasks. In reality God is the agent, not the bow. The bow is merely an instrument, unaware and unconscious of God, so that the world's apparent order can be maintained. Mighty indeed is the bow that becomes aware of the Bowman's hand!

What can you say about a world whose perpetuation and order rests on heedlessness? Don't you see how the people who are awakened become indifferent to this world? Through child-

hood, people grow and gain strength from negligence and play. How else can they ever have grown up to become men and women? Therefore, God puts us through pains and labors to wash away those acts of negligence and make us clean. Only then are we able to become aware of the other world.

The human being is like a dunghill, a heap of manure. If this manure-heap is precious, it is because hidden in it is the seal ring of the King. You are like a sack of corn. The King cries out, "Where are you carrying that corn? My cup is in it." People are unaware of the cup, being absorbed in the corn. If they knew of the cup, how could the corn distract them? Now, every thought that draws you toward the other world, making you cold and indifferent to this lower world, is a reflection of that cup flashing out. When men and women yearn after this lower world, however, this is a sign that the cup has become hidden in the heap.

discourse 55

Someone said: "Qadi Izz al-Din sends his greetings, and always speaks of you in the most approving terms."

Rumi answered: Whoever remembers us, and speaks us well,

Long may the world of their high merit tell.

When people speak well of others, those good words reflect back on themselves, and in the end they are praising and applauding their own essence. Those who cultivate the habit of speaking well of others are like gardeners who plant flowers and aromatic herbs around their houses—wherever they look out they see a beautiful display and are always in Paradise.

Whenever we speak well of another, that person becomes our friend. When we remember them, we remember a friend, and thinking of a friend is like being near flowers and aromatic herbs. It is refreshment and repose. But when we speak ill of others, those people become repulsive

in our eyes. When we think of them or their image even enters our thoughts, it is the same as snakes or scorpions, thorns or thistles appearing before us.

Since you can have flowers, aromatic herbs and the meadows of Iram, why do you choose to walk among the brambles and thorns? Think well of everyone so that you always dwell amongst the fields and meadows. Once you become the enemy of everyone, the images of your foes surround you day and night like scorpions and snakes.

This is why the saints have love for all people and think well of whomever they meet—not for the sake of others, but solely for themselves. Since, in this world no one can escape talking about other people or encountering their images, the saints struggle to hold everything in their mind and memory in an amiable and positive light, so that hateful images will not block their way.

So, whatever you say of others returns to yourself. Mohammed said:

"Whoever does good, it is to their own gain,
And whoever does evil, it is to their own loss.

And whoever does an atom's weight of good
Shall see it,
And whoever does an atom's weight of evil
Shall see it."

Someone asked a question about the following quote from the Koran:

"God declared:
'I am setting in the earth a viceroy.'
The angels said:
'What? Will You set there one
Who does corruption, and sheds blood,
While we proclaim Your praise and call You holy?'

"Since Adam had not yet come into the world, how could the angels know beforehand that the human race would be corrupt and shed blood?"

Rumi answered: There are two explanations—one traditional, and the other rational. The traditional version says that the angels read from the Preserved Tablet that a people would come forth who would act like this. The rational version says that the angels deduced by reasoning that people would come forth from the earth, and such people would have to bear the qualities of the earth, like animals. Although the spiritual element would be present in human beings, namely that they could speak, yet since animality would also

be in them, they would by necessity be ungodly and shed blood, this being the heritage of being human.

There is still another answer. Some people say that angels, being pure reason and goodness, have no choice in anything they say or do. Like in a dream, if you have no choice of what you say or do, how can you be criticized when you utter unbelief in your sleep, or declare God is One, or if you commit adultery? Angels are like this in their waking state. People are the reverse of that—they have freewill, are lustful and passionate, desire all things for themselves, and are ready to shed blood to gain what they want. These are the attributes of animals. Thus the state of the angels is the opposite of people.

It is perfectly fine to say that the angels spoke in this fashion, even though there was neither speech nor tongue, because if they were endowed with words and gave an account of themselves, this is how they would speak. In this same way the poet writes, "The pool said, I am full." Pools of course do not really speak, but the poet means that if the pool had a tongue, this is what it would have said.

Every angel has a tablet within them, and from that tablet, according to the degree of their own powers, they can read all that is to happen in the world and everything that will take place. When the moment arrives and what they have read actually comes into being, then their belief becomes stronger and their love and intoxication increase. They marvel at God's majesty and omniscience. That increase of love and faith, that wordless and unexpressed wonder, is the angel's praise of God.

Thus, a builder tells their apprentice, "In this house being built, so much wood will be used, so many bricks, so many stones, and so much straw." When the house is complete and exactly that amount of material was used, neither more nor less, then the faith of the apprentice grows. The angels too are in a similar case.

Someone asked: "The Prophet had such majesty that God said, 'But for thee I would not have created the heavens,' and yet Mohammed said, 'Would that the Lord of Mohammed had not created Mohammed.' How can this be?"

Rumi answered: Let me offer a comparison for this to help you understand the meaning. In a certain village a man fell in love with a woman. The

two lived together in happiness and pleasure. They grew fat and thrived on one another. They lived through each other, just as fish live in water. Many years they were together. Then one day God made them wealthy, bestowing on them many sheep, oxen and horses, gold, servants and slaves.

Because of their great fortune and prosperity, they set out for the city. Each purchased a royal palace, with horses and retinue—she in one part of the city and he in another. Once they reached their peak of wealth, they were no longer able to enjoy each other's company. Their hearts smoldered away within them, and they uttered secret lamentations, being unable to speak. The consuming fire in them became so violent that they entirely perished in the flames of separation. The torture of their grief passed all bounds. Finally their longing was heard by God.

Their horses and sheep began to vanish, and little by little they were restored to their former condition. So, after a long while, they were reunited in their home village and resumed full enjoyment of their life together. When they recalled the

bitterness of their separation, they cried, "Would that our Lord had never granted us such wealth."

As long as Mohammed's soul was dwelling in the world of holiness and union with God, he grew and thrived, plunging about in that sea of compassion like a fish. But, in this earthly world, even though he was endowed with the rank of prophet and guide to humanity, and granted greatness, majesty, fame and a large following, still on returning to that former joyous life he said, "Would that I never became a prophet or came into this world."

All these sciences, struggles and acts of devotion, in comparison to the merit and majesty of God, mean no more than bowing once, performing a service and then leaving. Even if you moved the whole Earth with your heart to serving God, it would amount to the same as bowing once to the ground. For God's merit and graciousness existed before your life and service. Did He bring you forth, give you existence, and make you capable of service and worship that you should boast of serving Him? These services and sciences are just as if you carved little shapes of wood and

leather, then came to offer them up to God, saying, "I like these little shapes. I made them, but it is Your job to give them life. If You give them life, You will make my works live. Or, You do not have to—the command is entirely Yours."

Abraham said, "God is He who gives life and death." Nimrod said, "I give life and death." When God gave Nimrod kingship, he deemed himself omnipotent as well, not attributing this credit to God. Nimrod said, "I too bring life to some and cause others to die, and what I desire throughout my kingdom comes from my knowledge." When God bestows knowledge, sagacity and shrewdness, people claim all credit for themselves, saying, "Through my skill and abilities, I gave life to these actions and have attained ecstatic joy." Abraham said, "No, it is God who gives life and brings death."

Someone said: "Abraham said to Nimrod, 'My God is He who brings up the sun out of the east and sends it down in the west. God brings the sun from the east. If you claim to be a god, then do the reverse." But then Nimrod compelled Abraham to abandon this point, and Abraham

left his first argument and Nimrod's rejoinder unanswered, embarking upon another proof."

Rumi answered: Others have talked nonsense about this, and now you too are talking nonsense. Abraham gave one and the same argument in two different forms. You have misunderstood, and so did they. There are many meanings underlying this statement. One meaning is this; that God brought you out of the concealment of non-existence from your mother's womb. Your "east" was your mother's womb. From there you rose, and you will go down into the "west" of your tomb. This is precisely the first statement, only expressed in another way: "He gives life and brings death. Now, if you are able, bring forth life from the west of the tomb, and send it back to the east of the womb."

That is one meaning—here is another: Through obedience, strenuous effort, and noble actions the Gnostic attains illumination and spiritual intoxication, but through the abandonment of obedience and effort their happiness goes down like the sinking sun, therefore these two states are their "east" and "west." "So, if you are able to

bring life into a state of death through abandonment of God, corruption and disobedience, then out of this setting sun manifest the illumination that only rises out of obedience."

But that is not the job of the servant, and the servant will never be able to do it. That is God's job; for if He wishes He causes the sun to rise from the west, and if He wishes from the east.

The unbeliever and the believer both express the praises of God. For God has promised that anyone who chooses the right road and practices right action, following the sacred law and the way of the prophets and saints, shall be granted happiness, illumination and life. If they do the reverse, they will be granted darkness and fear, pits and suffering. Since both believer and unbeliever choose as they do, and what God has promised comes to pass precisely, neither more nor less, then both are proclaiming the praises of God—the believer with one tongue, and the unbeliever with another. How great that difference is between the praises of one, and the praises of the other!

For instance, a thief commits a theft and is hung on the gallows. That thief is a preacher to the world, saying, “Whoever commits a theft, this is what becomes of them.” On another person, the king bestows a robe of honor due to their trustworthiness. They are also a preacher to the world. But the thief preaches with one tongue, and the trusty servant with another. Consider the difference between these two preachers!

discourse 56

Rumi said: You are now experiencing happiness. Why? Because the mind is a delicate thing, and like a snare it was properly set to catch its prey. If you are unhappy, then that snare is torn and useless.

Therefore, it is best not to be excessive in love or hatred towards others, since both of these leave the snare broken and torn. Moderation is best. By excessive love, I mean love for other than God. How can love for God ever be excessive? It is inconceivable—the greater our love for God, the better.

Yet, when our love for someone else becomes excessive, we strive for them to experience only good fortune, but that is impossible, and so the mind becomes disturbed. Similarly, when enmity is excessive, we wish that person only bad luck and misfortune, but the wheel of heaven is ever turning, and everyone's circumstances are also revolving. One moment they are lucky, the next

unlucky, and this seems unfair and disturbing to the mind.

But love for God is latent in all people, Magians, Jews or Christians, and in all things that have being. How can anyone not love Him who is the source of their existence? Therefore, love is latent in everyone, but circumstances veil that love. When those circumstances change, that love becomes manifest.

Yet, why do I speak of only things that have being? Non-being is also churning in the hope and expectation of being granted existence. Non-beings are like four people standing before a king, each one hoping the king will grant them special rank, and yet each one ashamed before the other three, because their own desires contradict each other. So they stand, ranging in their expectation of finding existence through God, yet each desiring to be the first, and therefore embarrassed before one another. If non-beings are in such a circumstance, how should those in existence be?

"There is nothing that does not proclaim His praise."

This is not remarkable. What is remarkable is that even no-thing proclaims His praise.

Both faith and unbelief are seeking Thee
And shouting Thy undivided Unity.

This house is built out of forgetfulness. All bodies and forms in this world are sustained through forgetfulness. Even our full-grown bodies grew by forgetting. But remembrance of God cannot exist without forgetfulness, for something must be forgotten before there can be remembrance. Therefore, faith and unbelief are one and the same, since one does not exist without the other. They are indivisible, and God is one. God is alone and has no partner.

Someone said: "Sayed Burhan al-Din discourses very well, yet he quotes Sana'i too frequently."

Rumi answered: What you say is true: the sun is excellent, yet it gives light. Is that a fault? Using Sana'i's words casts light on his discourse. The sun casts light on things, and through that light it is possible to see. The purpose of light is to see. After all, this sun in our heaven illuminates things that have no use. But the real sun shows things that are of use. This worldly sun is a reflection

and a metaphor. That real sun is the true sun. Do you yearn for the real sun and seek the light of knowledge? Then be expectant of understanding and learning something from every teacher and every friend.

We know of that other sun, apart from our physical sun, from which the realities and inner truths are revealed. Yet this partial knowledge that draws you, and through which you feel pleasure, is but a branch of that great knowledge and a ray of it. This ray is calling you to the original sun.

"Those—they are called from a far place."

You try to draw that knowledge towards yourself, but it answers you, "I cannot be contained in your world, it is impossible, and you have stayed away so long because it is difficult to reach me." Now, what is impossible is impossible, but what is difficult is not impossible. So, strive to attain that great knowledge, but do not expect to contain it here. The wealthy ones, out of their love for God's wealth, collect penny by penny, grain by grain. But the ray of wealth says, "I am calling to you from infinite wealth. Why do you try draw-

ing me piece by piece? I cannot be contained in pieces. Listen, and follow me to unlimited riches."

In short, the beginning depends upon the end—may the end be praiseworthy! What is a praiseworthy end? That the tree whose roots are fixed firm in the spiritual garden, whose branches, boughs and fruits suspend over another land, and whose fruits have scattered—that in the end those fruits should be carried back into that garden of its original roots. But if the roots of a tree belong to this world, although outwardly proclaiming praises of God, all its fruits should be carried back to this world. And if both roots and fruit are in the spiritual garden, then that is "Light upon Light."

discourse 57

Akmal al-Din said: "I love our Master and desire to see him. Even heaven is blotted out of my mind. I find comfort in his image without the need for any discourses or lofty ideas. I rest in his beauty. Pleasure comes to me from his very mien—even from a mental picture of him."

Rumi answered: Although heaven and God do not enter your thoughts, still they are implicit in love. A beautiful dancing-girl was once playing the castanets in the presence of the Caliph. The Caliph said, "Your art is in your hands." She replied, "No, in my feet, great Caliph! Excellence appears in my hands only because they have captured the excellence of my feet."

Although you do not remember heaven in every detail, still your delight in seeing the Sheikh, and your fear of being separated from him, contain all those details. All of heaven is captured in that image.

A family cherishes and loves each other. If thoughts of their care and fidelity, compassion

and fondness, and all the other benefits that kinsmen look for from kinsmen—if these thoughts do not enter their minds, still all these details are implicit. In the same way, air is implicit in wood, whether that wood is buried in earth or drenched in water. Without air in wood, fire could have no effect upon it, for air is the fuel of fire, the life of fire. Have you not seen how a breath of air puts life into fire? Whether wood is in water or earth, still air is latent in it. If air were not latent, wood could never rise to the surface of water.

It is the same with the words you speak. Many things are contained in those words, such as intelligence and thought, lips and mouth, throat and tongue, as well as the elements and temperaments, the influence of the stars, and the hundred thousand secondary causes upon which the world depends. On and on you can continue until you come to the world of attributes, and then essence—although none of these realities are put into words, yet all is implicit in your words.

Every day undesirable and painful experiences happen to us without our freewill. Certainly these things contain implicit messages in them beyond

our creation. We are under the control of Someone beyond, Someone that watches over. With many, an evil act brings pain. But despite these unwanted experiences, our nature does not want to accept the thought that we are under the control of another.

Divinity, which is the opposite of servanthood, is given to us on loan. We can be beaten over the head, still we won't let go of our borrowed stubbornness. We forget about our unwanted experiences, and we can not hear their message. Until that borrowed divinity becomes our own, we will not escape from being slapped.

discourse 58

Rumi related: A certain Gnostic once said, "I went to the baths to expand my heart, since the baths had become the place of retreat for certain saints. I saw that the master of the bath stove had an apprentice. The master was telling the apprentice, 'Do this and do that.' The apprentice was working briskly, and the stove gave off good heat because of how nimbly the orders were obeyed.

"'Fine,' said the master. 'Be nimble like this. If you are always energetic and mind your manners, I will give you my own position, and appoint you to my own place.'

"I was overcome with laughter," said the Gnostic, "and my inner knot was resolved, for I saw that bosses of this world all behave like this with their apprentices."

discourse 59

Someone said, "The astronomers say: You claim there is something beyond the heavens and this terrestrial ball. We believe, apart from what we see, nothing exists. If something exists, then show us where it is!"

Rumi answered: Your demand is invalid from the very start. You say, "Show me where it is," but that Thing has no place. Come then, tell me, where is your objection? Is it on your tongue, in your mouth, or within your breast? Search through all of these—divide them piece by piece, atom by atom, and you will still not find your objection, nor any thought. From this we realize that thought has no place. Since you do not know the place of your own thought, how could you know the place of the Creator of thought?

Thousands of emotions and moods come over you without your choice, for they are completely outside your power and control. If you only knew where these emotions came from, you would be

able to augment them. All these emotions pass over you, and yet you are wholly unaware where they come from, where they are going, and what they will do. Since you are incapable of penetrating your own moods, how do you expect to penetrate your Creator?

Those whore sons say, "God is not in the heavens." You cur, how do you know God is not? Yes, you have measured heaven span by span. You have gone through all of it, and you pronounce, "God is not in the heavens." Why, you do not know the whore you have in your own home, then how could you know the heavens? Oh yes, you have heard of heaven, and the names of stars and the spheres. You think that is something. If you really penetrated the depths of the heavens, or even mounted one single step, you would never utter such nonsense.

When we say that God is not in the heavens, we do not mean that God is not in the heavens. We mean that heaven cannot contain God, while God contains all. God has an ineffable link with the heavens, just as He has established an ineffable link with you. All things are in the hand of God's omnipotence, within His creation and

under His control. Therefore God is not outside the heavens and the universe, neither is He wholly in them. In other words, these things do not comprehend God, and yet God comprehends all.

Someone said: "Before earth, heaven and the Throne existed, where did God exist?" One of Rumi's students answered, "This question is invalid from the start, for God is One who has no place."

Rumi said: You ask, "Where was God before all this" Have you discovered the place of all these things in you, that you are searching for His place? Since your moods and thoughts have no place, how can a place for God be conceivable? Surely, the Creator of thought is subtler than thought. For instance, those who build a house are subtler than that house, because they are able to make and plan a hundred other buildings, each different from the last. Therefore they are subtler and more majestic than any fabric, but this subtlety can only be seen when they build a house and their work enters the visible world.

Your breath is visible in winter, but in summer is invisible. This doesn't mean that your breath is cut off in summer, but in summer your breath is

subtler and can not be seen. In the same way your attributes and essential elements are too subtle to be seen until you perform some act. For instance, your clemency exists, but it cannot be seen until you forgive an offender. Then your clemency becomes visible. Similarly, your vengefulness cannot be seen, but when you take revenge upon criminals and beat them, then your vengefulness is seen.

Because of God's extreme subtlety He cannot be seen. So He created heaven and earth, that His omnipotence and His handiwork would be visible.

These words I am given to share are not in my complete control, and therefore I am pained, because I would like to counsel my friends but the words do not come as I want them to. This brings pain. But since these words are higher than I, and I am subject to them, I am happy. For the words that God speaks bring life wherever they reach, and leave a deep impression.

"And when you threw, it was not
you who threw, but God."

The arrow that leaps from the bow of God, no shield or breastplate can stop. Therefore I am happy.

If we knew all that there was to know, and all ignorance was eliminated, we would be consumed and cease to be. Therefore ignorance is a good thing, since through it this world continues to exist. Knowledge is also desirable, for it leads to the awareness of God. Thus, each is a partner with the other, and all opposites are joined. Night is the opposite of day, yet they are partners and both do the same work. If night lasted forever, our eyes would become dazzled and our brains would go insane. Therefore we rest and sleep at night, and the brain, thought, hand and foot, hearing and sight, all gather strength. By day they expend these powers.

So all things appear in opposition, but to the wise they all work together and are not opposed. Show me an evil in this world without good, or a good thing without evil. For instance, a man intent on murder becomes preoccupied with the man's wife, and as a result he sheds no blood. There is no doubt that taking the man's wife is evil, but since this saves her husband's life she also sees this as good. Therefore evil and good are one thing and inseparable.

This is our main quarrel with the Magians. They say there are two Gods: the creator of good and the creator of evil. Show me good without evil—then I will admit there is a God of evil and a God of good! This is impossible, for good can not exist without evil. Since there is no separation between them, how can there be two creators?

Are we not arguing in opposition to you? By all means, we most definitely are. But we will not push this point too far, because you might wonder if the Magians are correct. Granted, you are not sure what I have said is wrong, yet how can you be sure that it is not right? Wretched infidel, Mohammed said, "Haven't you realized the threats which we have made might come true, and punishment will be visited upon the unbelievers as you have never imagined? Then why do you not take precautions and seek after Us?"

discourse 60

The Prophet says that Abu Bakr was superior to the other Companions, not due to his prayer and fasting, but because that special favor—the love of God—was with him. On the resurrection day, a person's prayers will be placed in the balance along with their fasting and generosity, but once love is brought forth it cannot be contained by any balance. Therefore, love is the root.

When you find love in your heart, then encourage it to grow. When you see the original investment within yourself, namely the desire for God, increase it through searching. "In movement is blessing." If you do not build on it, even the original desire will leave you.

Are you less than the earth? Farmers turn the earth with a hoe and it yields crops. When they abandon it, it becomes hard. So, when you find the quest for Truth within yourself, follow it wherever it may lead. Do not say, "What use is there in following this desire?" Just go! The profit will show itself.

Everyone goes to the store to fulfill their needs. God bestows both the desires and the provisions for each person, but if people sit at home acting self-sufficient then their provisions will never reach them. After all, when a little child cries, her mother feeds her. Now, if the child stopped to think, "What use is there in crying? How could crying possibly cause milk to come?" she would stay hungry. Therefore, crying brings her food.

This is the same as asking, "What use is there in this bowing, prostrating and prayer? Why should I do it?" Well, when you bow before a prince, the prince has compassion for you, doesn't he? But this compassion doesn't come from the prince's skin and flesh. Should he die, or when he is asleep, then bowing to the prince's body accomplishes nothing. So we realize that the compassion of the prince is something invisible. If we can bow to something invisible contained in skin and flesh, surely we can also bow to that Prince who is without skin and flesh.

If everything contained in skin and flesh were visible, Abu Jahl and Mohammed would have been the same, there would have been no difference between them. An ear, to outward appear-

ance, is the same whether deaf or hearing—there is no difference. Their material shape is the same. Therefore, that hearing exists invisibly and cannot be seen.

So the root of the matter is Divine grace. You, being a prince, have two slaves. One performs many spiritual services and makes numerous inward journeys on your behalf. The other is idle in serving you. Yet we see your love for the idle one is greater. You do not intend to let the active one go unrewarded, but that is what happens.

It is impossible to determine the cause of God's grace. This right eye and this left eye both appear the same. What service has the right eye performed that the left eye has not? And the right hand—what work has it done that the left hand has not done? Yet Divine favor has fallen on the right hand and right eye. So too, Friday has been preferred over the rest of the days.

"God has certain portions to bestow on people
Other than those inscribed on the Tablet,
So let everyone seek for them on Friday."

Now what service has Friday performed that the other days have not? Yet God bestowed His grace and special mark of honor upon Friday.

If a blind person should say, "I was created blind like this, it is not my fault," it will do them no good. It will not relieve them of their suffering. Those infidels who are fixed in unbelief—they suffer because of their unbelief. Yet looking at the matter again, that suffering is also a Divine blessing. When the unbelievers are at ease they forget the Source, so God reminds them through suffering. Therefore, Hell is a place of worship and is the mosque of infidels, for there the unbelievers remember God.

In prison, suffering, and toothache, when pain comes it tears away the veil of forgetfulness. The sufferers turn to God and pray, "O Lord, O compassionate One, O God!" They are healed. Then the veils of forgetfulness descend again and they say, "Where is God? I cannot find Him. I cannot see Him. Why should I even look?"

How is it that when you were suffering you saw and found, but now you cannot see? Therefore, suffering is made to prevail over you to the end, so that you will remember God. The sinner is forgetful in times of ease and does not recollect God. In Hell the sinner remembers night and day.

God created the world, heaven and earth, moon, sun and stars, good and evil, to remember Him, serve Him and proclaim His praise. Since the unbelievers do not remember unless they are suffering, and since their purpose in being created was to recollect God, they are sent suffering to remember Him.

Believers, however, do not forget that suffering—they see suffering as always present. In the same way, once an intelligent child has had its feet put in stocks as punishment, they never forget the stocks. The stupid child, however, forgets and must be put in the stocks every day. So, too, the clever horse, once it has felt the spur, does not require the spur again. It carries the rider for leagues without forgetting the sting of the spur. The stupid horse, however, requires the spur every moment; it is not fit to carry anyone, so they load it with dung.

discourse 61

Hearing something over and over from many people carries the same authority as seeing for yourself. For example, you've been told that you were born to your father and mother. You never saw this with your own eyes, but after hearing it many times from different people, you accept it as the truth. If you were told that they were not your parents, you wouldn't listen. Similarly, you have heard repeatedly from trusted people that Baghdad and Mecca exist. If all those people were now to swear an oath that those cities do not exist, you would not believe them. Therefore, when the ear has heard the same thing repeatedly from many different sources, it carries the same authority as the eye.

In the same way, if someone makes a statement that is a well-known saying handed down generation after generation, then that is not a single statement but a hundred thousand. What is so surprising in this? A king exercises the authority of a hundred thousand, though he is only one—if

a hundred thousand should speak nothing would happen, but when he speaks it happens immediately.

While this is the way of the external world, it is even truer of the spiritual world.

You may have seen this whole world, but since you have not seen it with God in mind, then you must make the trip again. "That journey was not on My account, it was for the sake of garlic and onions. Since you did not go about for My sake, but for another purpose, then that other purpose became a veil to you, not allowing you to see Me."

It is the same as searching earnestly for a person in the bazaar—you see nobody else, or if you see them they are only shadows. Or when you are hunting for the solution to a problem in a book, your ears and eyes and mind are full of that one problem. You turn the pages, yet you see nothing else. Since you had an intention and object in mind, wherever you went you were full of that goal.

In the time of Umar, there was a certain man who had grown so old that his daughter would feed him milk and look after him like a child.

Umar said to that daughter, "There is no child alive today to compare with you in your dutifulness to your father." She replied, "What you say is true, but there is a difference between what I give and what my father gave me. I may not fall short in service to my father, but when my father raised and served me he used to tremble for my safety and concern, while I serve my father and pray night and day asking God that he may die, so the trouble he causes me may end. If I serve my father, where can I get that same trembling he has for me?" Umar said, "This woman is wiser than Umar." He meant, "I have judged by externals, while she speaks of the core."

Those who are truly wise penetrate into the core of a thing and diagnose the truth of it. God forbid that Umar was not apprised of the truth and secrets of things, but such was the way of the Companions, that they criticized themselves and commended others.

There are many who lack the strength for "presence." They find "absence" more agreeable. In the same way, brightness comes from the sun and illuminates the world, but if people stare at

the sun's orb all day it does them no good and their eyes become dazzled. It would be better for them to become involved in some other task and leave the presence of the sun's orb. Similarly, to mention tasty dishes in the presence of sick people encourages them to gain strength and appetite, but the actual consumption of those dishes can do them harm.

Therefore, trembling and passionate love are necessary in the quest for God. Whoever does not tremble must wait upon the tremblers. No fruit ever grows on the trunk of a tree, for trunks do not tremble. The tips of the branches tremble, and the trunk supports the tips of the branches and the fruit securely, even against the blow of an axe. Since the trembling of the tree trunk would end in ruin, it is better for the trunk not to tremble. It suits the trunk to be quiet to better serve the tremblers.

Since the Amir's name is Mu'in al-Din, he is not 'Ain al-Din ("Essence of the Faith") because of the "M" added to the 'Ain. "Any addition to perfection is a diminution." The addition of that "M" is a diminution. In the same way, though a

sixth finger is an addition, still it is a diminution. Ahad ("One") is perfection, and Ahmad is not yet in the state of perfection. When that "M" is removed it becomes complete perfection. In other words, God comprehends all—whatever you add to God is a diminution. The number one is contained in all numbers, and without it no number could exist.

Sayed Burhan al-Din was teaching, when a fool interrupted him to say, "We need some words without comparisons or likenesses." The Sayed answered, "Whoever has no likeness, come and listen to words without likeness!"

After all, you are a likeness of yourself. You are not this body. The existence here is but a shadow of you. If someone dies, people say, "So-and-so has departed." If they were only that body, then where have they gone? So, your outer form is an analogy of your internal being, and from your external form others can judge your inner reality. Everything is visible because of density. Thus, the breath in hot weather cannot be seen, but when it is cold it becomes visible due to density.

It was the duty of the Prophet to manifest the power of God and by preaching to awaken others. It was not his job, however, to bring people to the stage of being ready to receive God's truth—that is God's work. God has two attributes: wrath and loving-kindness. The prophets are theaters for both. To believers they are a theater of God's love, and to unbelievers they become a theater for God's wrath.

Those who acknowledge truth see themselves in the Prophet, hear their own voice proceeding from him, and smell their own scent in his presence. No one denies the reality of their own self. Therefore the prophets say to the community, "We are you, and you are we, there is no strangeness between us." Someone says, "This is my hand." Nobody asks them for proof, since their hand is a part of them. But if they say, "So-and-so is my son," then proof is demanded, for that is something separate from themselves.

discourse 62

Some say that love is the cause of service, but this isn't true. Rather, the Beloved's desire is the true source of service. If the Beloved wishes the lover to help, then the lover provides that help. If the Beloved does not want it, then the lover gives it up. Abandoning service is not the abandonment of love. No, on the contrary, even if the lover performs no service, love continues working through the lover's heart. Therefore, the root of the matter is love, and service is the branch.

When the sleeve moves, this is because the hand moves. But this does not mean the sleeve always follows the hand. For instance, someone has a gown so large that when they move around, the gown does not move. We have all seen that. But what is not possible, is that the gown can move without the person moving.

Some people have mistaken the gown for a person, have considered the sleeve a hand, and imagined the boot to be a foot. Yet this hand and foot

are the sleeve and boot of another hand and foot. They say, "So-and-so is under the foot of So-and-so," and "So-and-so has a hand in so many things." Surely, when we speak of such a hand and foot we do not mean this hand and foot.

That Prince came and assembled us and then departed. In the same way, the bee unites the wax with the honey and then flies away. This is because our creation was a condition, but, after all, God's eternity is not a condition. Our mothers and fathers are like bees, uniting the seeker with the sought, and assembling together the lover and beloved. Then one day they suddenly fly away. God has made them a means for uniting the wax and the honey, and then they fly away, while the wax and honey remains. But they do not fly out of the garden. This is not the kind of garden that is possible to leave. Rather, they go from one corner of the garden to another.

Our body is like a beehive, assembled from the wax and honey of the love of God. Although the bees, our mothers and fathers, brought that honey and wax together, yet they too are tended by the gardener, and therefore it is the gardener who also

makes the beehive. God gives those bees a form appropriate to the work they are doing, but when they depart into the other world they change garments, for there a different work proceeds. Still, those people are the same as they were in the first place.

For example: a man goes into battle, puts on his battledress, girds on armor and places a helmet on his head to prepare for combat. But when he comes home to the feast he takes off those garments, since food and family are another business. Still, he is the same person. However, if you last saw him in that garment, then whenever you think of him, you will picture him in that shape and dress, even though he may have changed clothes a hundred times.

A woman loses a ring in a certain place. Though the ring has been moved, she still circles around that spot, implying, "It was here that I lost it." In the same way, a bereaved man circles around the grave, ignorantly circumambulating about the earth and kissing it, implying, "I lost that ring here," yet how could it still be there?

God performs so many wonderful works to display His omnipotence. It is here, for the sake of Divine wisdom, that He brings together spirit and body for a day or two.

People are afraid of death. They think that by sitting with a corpse in a tomb, even for a moment, they could go mad. Why then, once they are released from the trap of form and the tomb of the body, why would they remain nearby?

God has appointed the sight of a grave to strike fear into our hearts as a token, and to renew that fear of death again and again. In the same way, when a caravan has been ambushed in a certain place on the road, two or three stones are placed together there to act as a waysign, saying, "Here is a place of danger." Graves are also visible waysigns showing a place of danger.

Fear makes its mark on you, even though it is not always realized. For instance, if people say to you, "So-and-so is afraid of you," an affection immediately manifests toward them. If, on the contrary, they say, "So-and-so is not in the least afraid of you," and "They have no worry about

you at all," simply because of these words an anger appears in your heart.

This running about in life is the effect of fear. All the world is running, but each being runs in a different way. The human being's chasing or running away is of one kind, the pursuit and aversions of a plant are not the same, and the running of spirit is all together different.

For example, the running of the spirit is without visible step or sign. And consider the unripe grape, how much it pursues sweetness until it attains the blackness of the ripe grape. That running is invisible and imperceptible, but when the grape reaches that stage, it realizes what it had been chasing for so long. Similarly, someone enters the water without being seen by anyone, but when that person's head suddenly sticks out in the middle of the water, then everyone realizes how much swimming has been done to reach that point.

discourse 63

Lovers have heartaches no cure can mend, neither sleeping, traveling, nor eating—only the sight of the beloved. "Meet the Friend and your sickness will end." This is so true that even if a hypocrite sits in the company of believers, under their influence that hypocrite can become a believer in an instant. So God declares:

"When they meet those who believe,
They will say, 'We believe.'"

How then, when a believer sits with a believer? Since such company has this effect on a hypocrite, consider what benefits it brings to the believer! Consider how wool, in the hands of a wise weaver becomes a beautiful carpet, and this earth, through association with creative builders becomes a fine palace! Since the society of intelligent people has such an effect on inanimate things, then imagine what effect the society of believers has on the believer!

Through association with beings of even limited intellect, inanimate things can take on great

forms and beauty. These creations are all the shadow of partial intellects, and from these shadows you can understand the creators, themselves. So, then, deduce the Intellect and Being that casts the shadow of yonder heavens, the moon and sun, the seven layers of the earth, and all that lies between the earth and heaven. All these are the shadow of the Universal Intellect. The shadow of a limited being is proportionate to the shadow of its body. The shadow of the Universal Being, which is all of Creation, is proportionate to That.

The saints have seen other heavens besides these heavens. This world is unimpressive and lowly next to what they have been shown. The saints have set their foot upon those heavens and transcended them.

"Heavens there are in the province of the soul
That hold our worldly heaven in their control."

Why is it so amazing that a certain person, out of all of humanity, should discover the particular quality necessary to set foot upon the head of the seventh heaven? Are we not all made of the same substance as the earth? Yet God implanted in us a quality that distinguishes us from the earth,

putting us in control of that substance. We can control it however we choose—now lifting it up, now setting it down. Now we fashion it into a palace, now we make it a cup and goblet. Now we stretch it out, now we shorten it. Perhaps we were first made of this very earth and a part of it, but God has distinguished us by means of that faculty. In the same way, what is so hard to believe about the fact that out of the midst of us, who are all of the same race, God should distinguish a certain one, and that in relation to him we are like an inanimate thing, he controlling us, we being unaware of him, while he is aware of us?

When I say "unaware," I do not mean utterly unaware. Rather, everyone who focuses their attention on one thing is unaware of something else. Even earth, inanimate as it is, is aware of what God has given it. For if it were unaware, how could it be receptive to water, and how could it nurse and nourish every seed? When people apply themselves earnestly and completely to a particular task, their concentration on that task leaves them unaware of anything else. But this inattention does not mean total inattention. For

example, some people try to catch a cat, but it eludes them every time. Then one day that cat is so preoccupied with hunting a bird, that it does not see them approaching, and they catch it.

It is not necessary to become totally preoccupied with worldly affairs. We should take things easily, and not get caught up in bondage to them, lest in becoming disturbed we might distress something greater. The Treasure must not be disturbed, for if this world should worry, That Other will transform it, but if That Other is vexed (may we seek refuge with God!) then who will transform That?

If, for instance, you have many kinds of cloth, when you are absorbed, which of them will you clutch? Though they all may be indispensable, still it is certain that from your bundle you will choose something precious, something to be treasured, for with the value of one pearl and a single ruby you can produce a thousand ornaments.

From a certain tree, sweet fruit grows. Although that fruit is only one part, yet God has chosen and distinguished that part above the

whole, for in it God deposited a sweetness that He did not deposit in the rest. By virtue of that flavor, that part became superior to the whole, and proved the pith and purpose of the tree. So God declares:

"Nay, but they wonder that a warner has come to them from amongst themselves."

A certain person said, "I have attained a state in which neither Mohammed nor the angel near the Throne is contained." The Sheikh replied, "What is so amazing about having a state where Mohammed is not contained? Yet Mohammed does not have even one state in which a stinking creature like you is not contained!"

A certain jester wanted to restore the king to a better mood. Everyone had offered him a certain sum to accomplish this, for the king was deeply vexed. The king was walking angrily along the bank of a river. The jester walked on the other side, across from the king. But the king would not pay the slightest attention to the jester, he just kept staring into the water. The jester, becoming desperate, said, "O king, what do you see in the

water?" The king replied, "I see the husband of an unfaithful wife." The jester said, "Your slave is also not blind."

So, you may have a time when Mohammed is not contained, but Mohammed does not have a state where such a stinking creature is not contained. After all, this spiritual state you have discovered is due to his blessing and influence. For, first, all gifts are showered on him, then they are distributed from him to others. Such is the rule. God said, "O Prophet, We have scattered all gifts upon thee." Said Mohammed, "And upon God's righteous servants!"

The way to God is exceedingly fearful and blocked deep by snow. Mohammed risked his life, driving his horse through and opening up the road. Whoever goes on this road, does so by his guidance and guarding. He discovered the road in the first place, and set up waymarks everywhere, posting signs that say, "Do not go in this direction, and do not go that way. If you go that way you will perish, even as the people of 'Ad and Thamud, but if you go in this direction you will be saved, like the believers. All of the Koran

expounds this, for "therein are clear signs"—in other words, upon this road We have given waymarks. If anyone tries to destroy any of these signs, everyone will attack them, saying, "Why do you destroy the road for us? Why do you work toward our destruction? Are you a highway robber?"

Know that Mohammed is the guide. God says, "Until you first come to Mohammed you cannot reach Us." This is like when you decide to go somewhere; thought leads the way, saying, "Go to this place, it is in your best interests." After that your eyes act as a guide, and then your limbs begin to move, all in that order. But the limbs have no knowledge of eyes, nor the eyes of thought.

Though some people are forgetful, other people do not forget them. But if you work hard in pursuit of this world, you forget your real concern. You must seek God's approval, not the approval of society. Approval, love and affection are only on loan in us, being placed there by God. If God so wishes, there is no comfort or joy even with all the means of ease, bread and luxury pro-

vided—everything becomes pain and affliction.

All of these secondary conditions are like a pen in the hand of God's omnipotence. God is the mover and writer. Until He decides, the pen does not move. Your eye is fixed on the pen, and you say, "There must be a hand to this pen." You see the pen, but you do not see the hand. But seeing the pen, you remember the hand. There are those, however, who always see the hand. They say, "There must also be a pen in this hand." But seeing the beauty of the hand, they do not care about the pen. They simply say, "Such a hand cannot be without a pen."

While you are so delighted with beholding the pen that you forget the hand, they are so delighted with the hand, how could they care for the pen? While you find so much pleasure in barley bread that you never try wheat bread, they have wheat bread, so how could they care about barley bread? If He has given you such joy upon earth that you have no desire for heaven—the true place of joy—and since earth derives its life from heaven, then likewise, why should the inhabitants of heaven remember earth?

Therefore, do not think that happiness and pleasure come from secondary causes, for those realities are merely on loan. It is He who brings pain or gain, for all pain and profit come from Him. Why do you cling so tightly to secondary causes?

"The best words are those that are few and telling." The best words convey a lesson without going on and on. Though in the Koran the Sura, "Say, He is One," is short, still it is superior to the Sura of "The Cow", which is much longer, because of the message it contains. Noah preached for a thousand years and four people rallied around him. We all know how long Mohammed preached, yet the people of so many climes believe in him, and so many saints and "pegs" appeared because of him. A lot or a little is no way to judge. The true object is the lesson received.

With some, a few words may convey the lesson better than many. In the same way, if the fire of a stove is too fierce you cannot even approach it, so how can you gain any benefit from it? But there are a thousand advantages with a feeble lamp.

Hence, it is the benefit gained that is the true objective. With some people it is best not to hear any words at all—it is enough for them to see. That is what profits them most, and if they hear any words it actually harms them.

A certain Sheikh from India came to visit a great saint. When he reached Tabriz and came to the door of the saint's cell, he heard a voice from within saying, "Return home! For you have attained your need in coming to this door. To see the saint would harm you."

A few words that convey a lesson are like a lit lamp that kisses an unlit lamp and then departs. That was enough for him, he had attained his purpose. After all, the prophet is not that visible form, that form is only the steed of the prophet. The prophet is that Divine love and affection that is immortal.

Someone asked: "Then why don't they only praise God upon the minaret? Why do they also mention Mohammed?"

Rumi answered: Well, praising Mohammed is praising God. It is like saying, "Long live the king, and long live that friend who led me to the

king, and told me of the king's good name and attributes!" Praising that friend is praising the king.

The Prophet said, "Give me something. I am in need. Either give me your cloak, your wealth, or your clothes." Now, what would he do with your cloak or wealth? He wants to lighten your garment, so that the warmth of the sun can reach you.

"And lend to God a good loan."

He does not want wealth and cloak alone. After all, He has given you many things besides wealth: knowledge, thought, wisdom and vision. He means, "Expend on Me a moment's thought, care and consideration, since this wealth you gain comes through these gifts I have given." God asks for alms from bird and snake alike. If you can go before the sun naked, all the better, for that Sun does not burn black, it turns you white. Or at least lighten your clothes to feel the joy of that Sun. You have become accustomed to bitterness. At least for a while try sweetness too!

discourse 64

Every science learned in this world through study and experiment is the science of bodies. The science acquired by crossing the portal of death is the science of Soul. Knowing about the science of "I am God" is the science of bodies, but to become "I am God" is the science of Soul. To see the light of the lamp and the fire is the science of bodies, to burn in that fire and lamp's flame is the science of Soul. Everything experienced is the science of Soul, everything based upon knowledge is the science of bodies.

You could also say that the only truth is seeing and vision—all else is the science of fantasy. For example, an architect thinks through and imagines the building of a school. No matter how correct and accurate the architect's thoughts, still it is fantasy. It becomes reality only after builders actually raise and construct the school.

Now, there are differences between fantasy and fantasy. The fantasy of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman

and Ali is superior to the fantasy of the Companions. Between one person's fantasy and another's are great differences. An expert architect pictures building a house. Another person who is not an architect also imagines a house. However, the differences are great because the architect's fantasy is closer to reality. It is the same in the world of realities and vision, there are differences between one person's vision and the vision of others.

They say there are seven hundred veils of darkness and seven hundred veils of light. Well, all the worlds of fantasy are veils of darkness, and all the worlds of realities are veils of light. But between those veils of darkness, there is no knowledge that can grasp their extreme subtlety, and despite the vast and enormous variation between the worlds of realities, those differences can never be comprehended by the mind.

discourse 65

Those who are living in Hell are happier there than they would be in this world, for in Hell their awareness turns to God, while in this world they forget. Nothing is sweeter than the awareness of God. Therefore, their desire to return to this world is to work and carry out deeds so that they can witness the manifestation of Divine grace, not because this world is a happier place than Hell.

Hypocrites are consigned to the lowest place in Hell, because they were shown the faith but their unbelief was stronger. They did nothing with the gift they were given. Their punishment is more severe so they can become aware of God. To the unbelievers, faith never came. Their unbelief is not as strong, and so they become aware through less punishment. Between pants with dust upon them, and a carpet with dust, the trousers only need one person to shake them a little to become clean, while it takes four people shaking the rug violently to rid the carpet of its dust.

The inhabitants of Hell cry:

"Pour upon us water, or of that
God has provided you..."

God forbids their desire for food or drink, therefore this saying means, "Pour upon us from what you have found, and shines upon you."

The Koran is like a bride who does not show her face to you even when you draw aside the veil. The fact that you have examined her, and yet have not attained happiness or mystical unveiling, is a sign that your act of trying to remove her veil has itself repulsed her, so that she appears to you as ugly. She says, "I am no beautiful bride." The Koran shows itself in whatever form it pleases. But if you do not try drawing aside the veil, and seek only the Koran's good pleasure, watering its fields, attending it from afar, working upon whatever pleases it best, then it will show you its face without any effort at drawing aside the veil.

Seek the people of God, for God does not speak to every one, just as the kings of this world do not speak to every weaver. They have appointed viziers and deputies to show the way to the king. God has also chosen certain servants, so

that whoever seeks God can find God in them. All the prophets have come for this reason—only they are the Way.

discourse 66

Siraj al-Din said: "I was speaking to someone about a problem when something within me began to ache."

Rumi said: That something is put in charge of you to prevent you from speaking when you should not speak. Usually it is so subtle that it goes unnoticed, but when you feel that yearning, compulsion and pain, then you know there is something in control. For instance, you enter a pool of water and the softness of the flowers and fragrant herbs reach you, but when you get to the other side thorns prick you. Then you realize that one side is a thorn-bed and pain, while the other side is a flowerbed and comfort. These differences affect us through our emotions, yet they are closer to us than anything external.

Hunger and thirst, anger and happiness—all these are invisible, yet they affect us more than anything we can see. For if you close your eyes, you can no longer see the perceptible, but this will

not drive hunger away. In the same way, spice in hot dishes, sweetness and bitterness in foods, these cannot be seen, yet their taste has a much stronger effect upon us than how the food looks.

Why do you worry about this body? Why are you so attached to it? You live without it. You are always without it. When nighttime comes you forget it, but once the day arrives you are absorbed in your body's affairs. But you are never truly with the body, so why tremble over its concerns. You are not with it for a single hour, but are always elsewhere. Where are you, and where is the body?

"You are in one valley, and I am in another."

This body is a great deception.

Pharaoh's magicians paused for an instant, like a speck of dust hanging in the air, and gave up their forms, for they knew they lived apart from the body, and the body was not them. In the same way, Abraham, Ishmael and all the prophets and saints, having paused, were indifferent to whether the body existed or not.

Hajjaj, who smoked hashish, once shouted, "Do not move the door or my head will fall off!"

He thought his head was disconnected from his body and stayed in place only through its connection to the door. It is the same with all people—we think we are connected with the body and depend upon it for survival.

discourse 67

"He created Adam in His likeness."

Everyone is seeking the manifestation of God. For example, there are many veiled women who uncover their faces to try the object of their desire, like you try a razor. There are lovers who say to their beloved, "I have not slept and I have not eaten. I have become like this and that without you." What they mean is, "You are seeking a manifestation of God. I am the manifestation you can vaunt your belovedness upon." In the same way, all scholars and learned people are seeking to manifest God's desire, "I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known."

"He created Adam in His likeness," meaning in the likeness of God's laws. Divine law is manifest in all creation, because all things are the shadow of God, and the shadow is like the person. If the five fingers spread out, the shadow also spreads out. If the body bows, the shadow also bows. If it stretches out, the shadow also stretch-

es out. Therefore, all people seek a Beloved, for they all desire to be lovers of God, enemies to His enemies, and friends to His friends. All these are the rules and attributes of God that appear in the shadow.

To sum up, this shadow world is unaware of who we really are, yet we are aware. But in comparison to God's knowledge, this awareness of ours is unawareness. Not everything in a person shows in their shadow, only certain things. So not all the attributes of God show in this shadow world, only some of them, for

"You have been given of knowledge nothing
Except a little."

discourse 68

Jesus was asked, "What is the most difficult thing in this world and the next?" He said, "The wrath of God." They asked, "And what can save us from that?" He answered, "Master your own wrath and anger towards others."

When the mind wants to complain, do the opposite—give thanks. Exaggerate the matter to such a degree that you find within yourself a love of what repels you. Pretending thankfulness is a way of seeking the love of God.

Our Master, Shams, said, "To complain of creation is to complain of the Creator." He also said, "Hatred and rage lay hidden in your unconscious. If you see a spark leap from that fire, extinguish it, so that it will return to non-existence from where it came. If you insist on matching anger with anger and promoting the flame of rage, it will spring faster and faster from your unconscious, and become more and more difficult to put out."

Chase away evil with something good, and you triumph over your enemy in two ways. One way is this—your enemy is not another person's flesh and skin, it is the contagiousness of their hatred. When that is cast out of you by an abundance of thanks, it will inevitably be cast out of your enemy as well, because everyone instinctively responds to kindness, and you have left your opponent with nothing to fight against.

It is just like with children, when they shout names at someone and that person yells bad names back, they are all the more encouraged, thinking, "Our words have had an effect." But if the enemy sees their words bring about no change they lose interest.

The second benefit is this: When the attribute of forgiveness comes forth in you, other people realize they have not been seeing you as you truly are. Then they know that they are the ones to be reproached, not you, and no proof puts adversaries to shame more than that. So by praising and giving thanks to detractors you are administering an antidote to that hatred in them, for while they have shown you your deficiency, you

have shown them your perfection.

Those who are loved by God can hardly be defective. Thus, let us praise those who criticize us, so their friends will think, "It is our friends who are at odds with the Sufis, since the Sufis always speak well to our friends."

Though they are powerful,
Pluck out their beards politely.
Firmly break their necks,
Though they are high and mighty.
May God assist us in that!

discourse 69

Between the human being and God are just two veils—health and wealth—all other veils come from these. Those who are healthy do not look for God and do not see Him, but as soon as pain afflicts them they cry out, "O God! O God!" calling out and surrendering to God. Therefore, health is their veil and God is hidden in their pain.

As long as people have wealth, they gratify their desires, and are preoccupied night and day with pleasures. The moment poverty appears, their spirits are weakened and they turn to God.

Drunkenness and poverty brought You to me,
I am the slave of Your drunkenness and need!

God granted to Pharaoh four hundred years of life, kingship and enjoyment. All that was a veil, which kept him far from the presence of God. He did not even experience a single day of disagreeableness and pain, so that he would completely forget God. God said, "Go on being preoccupied

with your own desire, and do not even think of me. Good night!"

King Solomon grew weary of his reign,
But Job was never sated of his pain.

discourse 70

Rumi said: Some people say that in the human soul is an evil not found in animals and wild beasts, but this does not mean that people are worse than beasts. Rather, this evil character and darkness of soul in the human being hides a secret essential element. The more precious and noble that element is, the greater the veil to hide it, and such veils cannot be removed without great effort.

These struggles are of various kinds. The greatest is to spend time with friends who have turned their faces to God and turned their backs on this world. There is no more difficult combat than this, for the very sight of them dissolves our ego and worldly desires. That is why they say that if a snake has seen no human for forty years it becomes a dragon, since it has seen no one who could stop the growth of its own evil nature.

Wherever men or women put a big lock, that is a sign of something precious and valuable. Just

like the snake that guards a treasure, do not regard a person's ugliness, but look instead at the preciousness of their treasure.

discourse 71

The difference between birds on the wing, and lovers of God, is that birds always fly in a certain direction, while lovers of God fly on the wings of their desire away from all directions.

Every horse has its stable, every beast its pen, every bird its nest. And God knows best.